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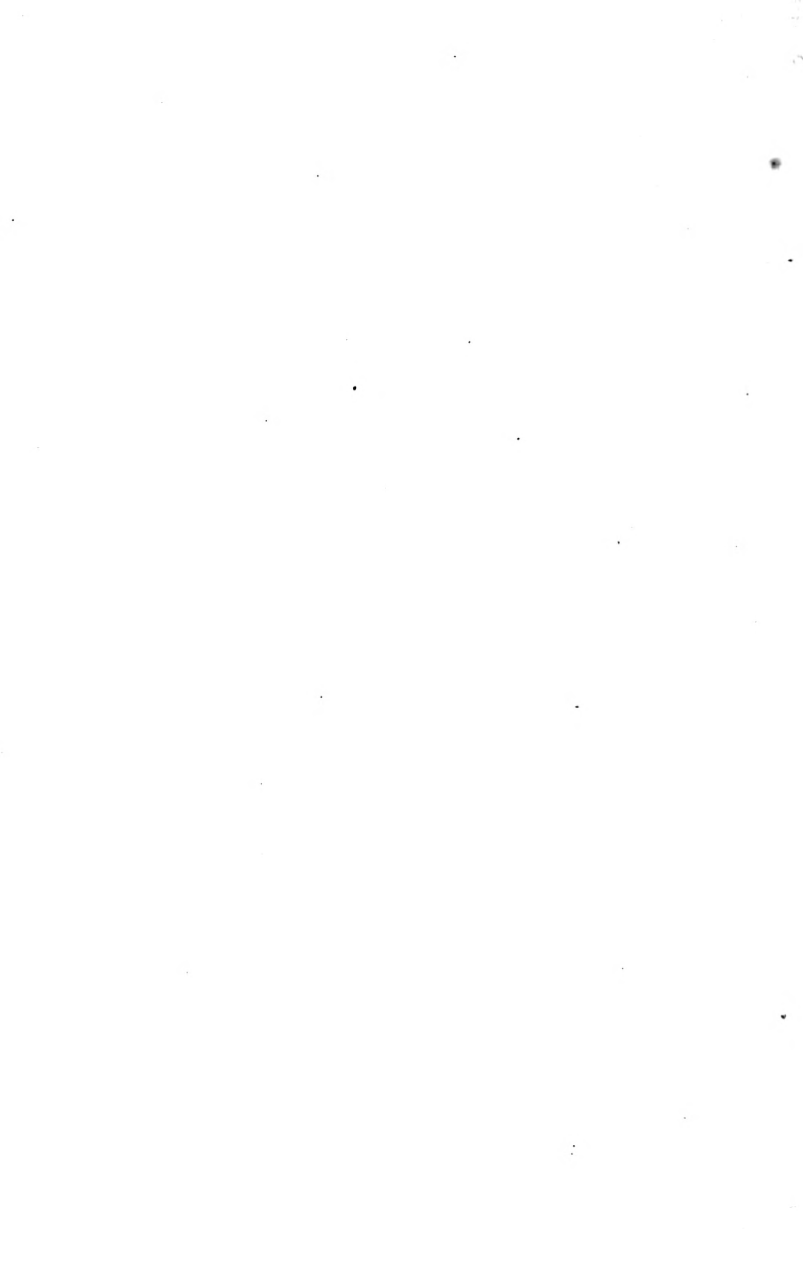
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MISS BEAUCHAMP:

A PHILISTINE.

VOL. II.



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MISS BEAUCHAMP:
A PHILISTINE.

BY
CONSTANCE MACEWEN,

AUTHOR OF
"GIN A BODY MEET A BODY," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

"Such a Lord is Love."

LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL
(LIMITED).
1883.

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VOLUME II.

“ We came to the Isle of Flowers,
 Their breath met us out on the seas ;
For the spring and the middle summer
 Sat each on the lap of the breeze.”

007

MISS BEAUCHAMP:

A PHILISTINE.

CHAPTER I.

ARCADY.

*“ Much adoe there was, God wot,
He wold love and she wold not.”*

*“ Force, force, everywhere force ; we ourselves a mysterious
force in the centre of that.”*

WHEN, not long ago, it was discovered that Pascal had been in love, a violent stir was caused amongst critics. Was it possible that this cynical and *effrayant* genius had been in love? *Who* was the inspirer of this love? The consciousness that a common malady had

befallen him, had caused just such a stir on a localized scale in the minor cycles of Mr. Cantilupe's being.

Yes ; this unrest, this disquietude, this perplexing pain, this desire to be near Diana—to spend each minute in her presence—all pointed to this fact.

Mr. Cantilupe had elected to play a strange *rôle* in life, and his *rôle* so far had succeeded. He had been poor, and poverty had fretted the refinement of his tastes. He now was rich, and riches had brought him influence and possessions. But for his appearance he could not have played his *rôle* ; but to find yourself unlike other people is to force you into the conspicuousness of retirement or the buzz of notoriety.

Mr. Cantilupe's appearance marked him, so he traded on that appearance. His mind was partly visionary, and he easily cloaked his words



in somewhat mystic forms of expression ; so that, both externally and internally, he impressed his hearers with a difference between themselves and himself so great, that in bewilderment they took his counsel, and hailed him as a sort of leader.

If he had desired to found a religion such as Mahomet, doubtless he could have done so ; his trances, real or imaginary, would have been admirably performed, and he would have painted such rewards to his followers that, by the very juggle of his words, they would have flocked about his standard. But Mr. Cantilupe had no such ambition as this ; he was well satisfied to wrap himself in a mystic cynicism, which had already brought in its wake such notoriety as he elected to have ; and as for heading an army of soldiers, or civilians, or pilgrims, Mr. Cantilupe left such ambitions to those who had them.

Mr. Cantilupe was meditating on the best method of declaring his love, and was conscious of an odd sensation—it was the nearest approach to timidity he, in the panther-like courage of his subtle nature, had ever experienced ; it was, perhaps, the first approach to that which was best and purest in his love.

Yes ; he feared Diana. For what is timidity but fear ? and Mr. Cantilupe felt an unaccountable dread of Diana's displeasure. He found himself revolving three problems. The first—“ Is the ground clear ? ” the second—“ In what form shall I woo her ? ” the third—“ How long will it take me to succeed ? ”

The first question Mr. Cantilupe debated long. “ Has no man touched her heart ? This, with her responsive nature, is hardly probable. Yet she has a dash of indifferentism about her which may have kept ‘ Arcady ’ free from all intruders. Besides, she seems absolutely

without a past; she lives very much in the present; and be sure when a woman lives in the present she has no past, or, if a past, then a dead past. But, if she has a past, could I not exorcise it?"

Mr. Cantilupe, looking meditatively in the mirror facing him, caught the strange power which lurked in his eyes—caught the Ego, and bade that consideration begone.

The second problem now came forward and awaited consideration: "How shall I touch this woman's heart? How! she is intellectual—so am I. We flash on one another. She is eager for more knowledge; and that eagerness in some measure I can quench; for, knowing the power of knowledge, I have not failed to drink deeply at most fountains. *Here* I touch her; *here* is my most powerful weapon. If I possess the intellectual love of The Diana, 'tis the most I can aspire to. I know she is calm

and cool in my presence; meets my glance without embarrassment, and without so much as the droop of an eyelid; she is *glad* to see me, and *sorry* when I leave; but *this, this* is not ‘*Arcady*.’”

Then Mr. Cantilupe bid that second problem retire, and now advanced the third and last—“How long?” Here Mr. Cantilupe took a stroll round the room.

“How long? If it be a lifetime, I can wait. Yes; can and will wait! In this chase I will embrace Time if needs be; Time and I will unite to win her—Diana, the Great Diana. I will bring my stores and lay them at her feet. I am hers; but if she thwart me it will be bitter, bitter as wormwood; it will end in woe.”

If Mrs. Battle could have seen Mr. Cantilupe at that moment, she would have said, “My instincts are right. Oh! Miss Beauchamp,

be warned—be warned.” But, as far as earthly eyes were concerned, Mr. Cantilupe’s thoughts were invisible. The thoughts that were in him had come so far uppermost that they shone red in his eyes. They were thoughts of vengeance—sinister, voiceless thoughts, yet perfectly formed, and ready for action when the moment came.

Oh ! these voiceless thoughts that haunt the secret corners of a being, ready for service, like a regiment of seasoned soldiers ; how hideous when equipped for deadly deed ; how lovely when, garbed in whitest white, they wait like angels to do some glad and gracious service ! Yes ; there comes a moment in the experience of each of us when we prove ourselves, when we drag forth what is in us, when we know ourselves ; and that moment had come for Mr. Cantilupe.

He knew that his hate would be in proportion to his love, even for this fair Diana, whose gracious beauty had penetrated him, as sunrise streams down on a barren rock and gilds it with promise. He had confronted his passion, and he found it strong and wily, ready for a wolf's stride, or a panther's leap, or a serpent's glide; his very figure seemed to transform itself as he contemplated opposition, and to attain a certain significance of proportion which would make a foe take his measure.

But Mr. Cantilupe was not a man to linger long in cobweb speculations. Like a spider he had built his web; but he was not going to sit in it waiting for his fly; time enough to betake himself to such a position if circumstances required the posture; for the present, intellectual incense should be constantly ascending before Diana.

She had asked him to lend her some of Ruskin's books, which she had found it so difficult to obtain. He would go and see her, and discourse on Ruskin, and he would amuse her by carrying with him a portrait of Gundulf, the crying Friar of Bee. He would tell her how Gundulf built and wept, and wept and built, and how he could outcry any one of the several Monks of Bee. And here was a clever hit on the Purists and Restorationists, fighting it out in a pen-and-ink sketch. The Purists in tatters, and hugging themselves; the Restorationists in the neatest of eighteenth century habiliments, pointing with scorn at their antagonists. *This* would also amuse Miss Beauchamp. Had she not declared she would never restore the Court, but let it hobble on crutches till it fell down and returned to the universal dust-bin?

Then Mr. Cantilupe twisted the fine points of his waxed moustache, and thought of Diana's great attachment to the ramshackle yet charming old place; and his meditations took yet another direction. Would it make any difference in her regard for himself, if he assumed the title he disdained of Duca di Cantilupe? "Well for me that I did disdain it, or I should not be as I am—rich enough to hold a mimic court in Italy at all events. No, no; let the Duca remain where he is. Titles are passports for the insignificant." Then Mr. Cantilupe put on his hat, and went forth to see Miss Beauchamp.

CHAPTER II.

INTELLECTUAL WOOING.

“Excellent is culture for a savage ; but once let him read in the book, and he is no longer able not to think of Plutarch’s heroes.”

THE little drawing-room in M—— Street was arranged with Diana’s own individuality of placing and touch. She never considered anything not worth while ; every minute was of consideration to her, and the surroundings of that minute of importance. She was a great reader, and the various small tables about the room were loaded with all the new books and pamphlets.

On the morning of the day Mr. Cantilupe

called she had been delving for many hours in out-of-the-way streets to find some rare singing birds, but had only succeeded in procuring a beautiful macaw, with which Mr. Cantilupe found her childishly delighted.

“Miss Beauchamp, there is in you a rare combination,” said he, as he stood regarding her; “an extraordinary intellectual appetite, in pleasing union with the glad joy in such trifles as macaws, which I should expect to see in one of Byron’s bread-and-butter young ladies.”

When Mr. Cantilupe was playful he reminded you of quicksilver running up and down a barometer, the play was so peculiar.

“You call this perfect creature a trifle, Mr. Cantilupe?” said Diana, as she stroked the lovely plumage of the wise-looking creature. “Hues such as these always fill me with a great reverence; in fact, the whole animal

world, with its pathetic and almost unexplored links with man, is to me one of the great attractions of life. This is why *I* could not picture a Heaven without these charming creatures.

“Most people seem to be shocked at the notion of encountering these dear companions in another world. My love for animals will, I hope, be hereafter developed into a vaster range of appreciation; so will all that is best in us. Watch a dog’s eye when he is dying: his faithful gaze is directed to his master, and the seat where he shows his joy gives a feeble farewell wag. Where goes the spirit of that dog? ‘*He has no spirit,*’ you say, *horrified and shocked* at the audacity of the question. I merely answer, *Has he not?*”

Mr. Cantilupe felt himself somewhat far removed from these speculations, but he did not show it.

“Miss Beauchamp would never be seen at Hurlingham, I conclude,” said he, as he leant forward to scratch the macaw’s head, who rather viciously returned his playful caress by seizing his finger, and giving vent to shrill screams.

Mr. Cantilupe extricated his finger without any expression of pain, so Diana concluded the macaw’s beak was rather blunt; but she apologized with real concern.

“Nothing seems to hurt me,” said Mr. Cantilupe; “I’ve too much will to notice physical pain. Not that the beak of your macaw is a witness to this indifference. With all the will to do it he has not grazed the skin.”

“Miss Beauchamp would not be seen at Hurlingham,” he reiterated.

“Indeed, I would not,” said Diana, colouring deeply; “I often wonder how English-

men can sink their supposed love of fair-play in such barbarous cruelty. Is it not despicable, for the sake of fashion, or that sheep-like tendency of the age, to take aim at the poor little pigeons who are let loose for their amusement? We are but half-civilized yet."

"Miss Beauchamp will civilize us," said Mr. Cantilupe. "Do you feel, like Carlyle and other lights, that you have a message for the race?"

"I can only express the messages of others at present," said Diana, as she turned over the pages of the 'Stones of Venice.' "Some day, perhaps, I may grasp my own message.

Mr. Cantilupe passed his hand across his brow, and swept away an abstraction. "Should he risk all now, and hurry the story of his love into her ears with the onward sweep of an over-mastering passion?" Forces were urging him—forces he had never experienced before.

Yes, absolutely childish forces he had thought them, as he had read how men had lost all for a woman's smile, and plunged hither and thither with the mad movements of a blind Samson to obtain their desires. And now he was beset in the same fashion, only his love was charged with a thousand wiles that could dodge and wait and lurk, and be "on guard" or "stand at ease," to win Diana.

There were elements of greatness in his love. Yes, she had stirred what was best in a nature capable of ugly deeds; he was capable of treading upon any person or thing to obtain his desires. Oh, he was not dainty in his footsteps, fine and delicate as was the form of that foot; it could walk over a *parqueterie* composed of hearts, if needs be; and, cry you ever so lustily, he would walk on daintily, finely, firmly, with never an awkward stumble. But

there were elements of greatness in his love, because he had patience, and is there not in all active patience an element of greatness?

Diana, glancing up from her survey of the 'Stones of Venice,' met Mr. Cantilupé's eyes; those eyes of his at all times different to ordinary eyes, and now rendered ten times more inexplicable by the wondrous leverage of love. They had darkened with the force of impulse, which impulse was as carefully guarded as a prisoner by a capable *gendarme*.

Diana was not given to thinking men were in love with her, it was true; she had experienced many Southern avowals of love, and she had waved them one and all away. She was not ignorant of love's declarations; but there was something in this glance of Mr. Cantilupé's which held her as the threat of danger might hold you. She experienced the oddest sensation she had ever felt in her life;

his glance seemed to draw her heart to the surface, and hold it palpitating with fear, awe, curiosity—a mingling of consciousness and unconsciousness, of new ground and unaccustomed feet, of pitfalls.

Amidst all this medley of sensations, the round face and ample cap-strings of Mrs. Battle rose before her, and the demonstrative dislike which wreathed her lips as she exclaimed, “Miss Beauchamp, be warned, be warned; he will wind about your life, and suffocate you.” How quickly thoughts pass through our frames, thoughts which might compass our lives, thoughts which hold all our lives in one palpitating compass!

Mr. Cantilupe saw that Diana was aroused from her unconsciousness; he saw the effect he had produced; he saw, and quickly withdrew from the confession which had been permitted to escape through the subtle yet easily

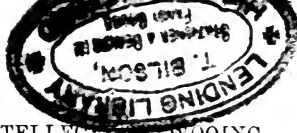
translatable medium of his eyes, and commenced in lazily monotonous tones to discourse on Ruskin, on Gundulf, on anything and everything.

Before ten minutes had elapsed Diana had forgotten her surprise, and if she remembered it again it would be to push *that* thought away as a mistaken and objectionable intruder. Mr. Cantilupe had wandered on to a topic which had a spell for Diana. He was discoursing on English poets, and describing poesy as the fragrance of our nation's history. He had commenced with that "worshipful man" Geoffrey Chaucer; then he had skipped two dreary centuries, almost forgotten of the poets, to Spenser; he touched on the "self-wrapt" and solitary shining Milton; had moved onwards to Shelley and Keats.

Diana found herself listening, happily enough, to the very elegant criticisms with which he

commented on these several poets. Mr. Cantilupe could criticize to perfection. He praised with enthusiasm, and blamed without too bitter an edge to his knife. His knowledge of life gave a piquancy to his reviews which was singularly attractive. He could even appreciate Mrs. Barrett-Browning's flights; he discoursed on the passion, if he avoided the pathos, of her poems.

He went into a careful analysis between *talent* and *genius*—talent which carries a far greater commercial value in its wake than genius; that untaught child, with its wistful and often indefinable utterances, which can only reach the fine tissues of its audience, and seems to fret and chafe between the trappings of all conventional teaching. *Talent*, which finds a place on our drawing-room tables and fills the high posts of our national arrangements; *genius*, which in the very strength



and weakness of its inspirations must find its glees and its glooms amidst the lonely spots of earth.

“Tell me of our prose authors,” said Diana. “Label them—and when I say our authors, I mean the world-writers.”

“Scores of *talented* writers,” said Mr. Cantilupe, “some few who penetrate you with the touch of genius. De Balzac has genius; he never *makes* a book—the book makes itself. Victor Hugo has genius. Genius is ever prolific—it must be rapid, or it is *not* genius. It is like improvisation; it asks for a *Mandoline* to accompany its impassioned utterances, and the fragrance of swaying limes—nothing more. George Eliot has talent, so cultivated and exquisitely garbed, that from tip to toe she is *perfect*; and in the very perfection of her cold outline escapes the wild beauty of genius, which has passed her by.

“Walt Whitman, the New World singer, has genius; though his country is as yet hardly ‘strong’ enough to receive him, he sings for *all*—he embraces *all*. The irresponsible and the responsive find their exponent in him. If you protest that his ethics savour too much of the Aristotelian flavour, I say they are full of a ‘sane sensuality.’ And if you protest I contradict myself, then, with Walt Whitman, I say—‘Do I contradict myself?’ Very well, then, I contradict myself. But time is passing, like love, and everything else. Adieu, Miss Beauchamp.” And so Mr. Cantilupe’s intellectual wooings ended for that day.

CHAPTER III.

AN EXQUISITE SMILE.

“‘Great’ believers are always reckoned infidels—impracticable, fantastic, atheistic—and, really, men of no account.”—EMERSON.

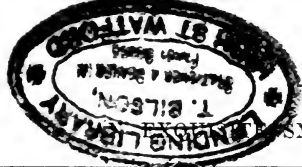
“I swear, I think there is nothing but immortality, that the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float is for it, and the cohering is for it.”—WALT WHITMAN.

DIANA was back again at Beauchamp Court; the season was over, and she had returned with a great reputation. All the county had called upon her now. Lady Masters had met her in London, at Lady Mary Charteris’s; and, seeing the ovations Miss Beauchamp received on all sides, had quickly made her acquaint-

ance. This was the signal for the county to follow; and Diana had received them one and all with that gracious indifferentism which was distinctive of herself; but had declined every invitation to dinner or tennis on the plea of fatigue after her campaign in town—all save one. Sir Blaise had invited the county to an “At Home” at Whitefriars—Diana amongst the rest—and Diana was going.

“You are coming with me, Homespun,” said Diana on that evening. “I think something strange is about to happen to-night. Do these vague discernments of ours, these dim gropings into the future, count for nothing? You remember I told you, some time ago, I thought Sir Blaise was off on a ‘quest.’ Has he attained it yet?”

“Dear heart! I am sure I can’t tell,” said Mrs. Battle. “Sir Blaise has been passing



strange, it is whispered, since that narrow escape. What a splendid man he was to be sure, to be sure !”

“And *is*,” said Diana. “I met him to-day ; in fact, went down on my knees before him—or, rather, Bess did. She is past work. I must really get a polo pony.”

“Did Sir Blaise pick you up ?” said Mrs. Battle excitedly.

“Of course, and sent me on my way,” said Diana, laughing ; and then she threw a shower of rose-leaves from a *pot-pourri* on Mrs. Battle’s head, and wandered out into the garden, leaving that lady smiling with a smile which threatened to be stationary—for *that* day, at any rate.

Though Whitefriars had been destroyed, according to the “purists,” still, when lighted up at night, it stood out as one of the palace homes for which England, thanks to

her Constitutional arrangements, is so celebrated.

Once let Democracy set in, and where would the ancestral dignity of England be, where would the entail go? Thanks to the "eldest son," we can yet glory in these princely palaces. With the downfall of entail would come the downfall of the unique charm of England.

The dining-hall at Whitefriars was paved with polished marble, and the walls were entirely glass. Anything more dazzling than the appearance of this room would be difficult to imagine. The white gleaming floors and the long reflection in the mirrors had a wonderful effect. The architect had copied this room from a similar one in the palace of the Rajah of M——.

The drawing-rooms were paved in the same manner, and the drapery, whether of hang-

ings or coverings, was all composed of white-flowered velvet; chairs, however ancient in shape—couches, however curious in build—were alike arrayed in this rich fabric. The rooms were destitute of colour save for the splendour of flowers and the deep hues of Venetian glass.

Curiously enough, Diana had elected to wear on this particular evening a gown of white velvet, and the same leafy pattern was carried out on her drapery as on the drapery at Whitefriars. Her only ornament was a necklet of gems which had been twisted in and out amidst a bouquet thrown at her during prolonged applause at Cosmos Hall. The gems were roughly set, and a serpent's head, formed of large diamonds, composed the clasp.

"You look wonderful in that white velvet," Mrs. Battle had said, in her usual admiring

fashion, before starting; "but is it not too warm for this summer evening?"

But Diana shivered, and replied, "You don't know the meaning of the word Summer in England."

When Diana entered the drawing-room at Whitefriars she seemed to have grown out of the surroundings.

Sir Blaise, as he advanced to meet her, felt involuntarily reminded of the White Lady whom tradition associated with Whitefriars. Was this Miss Beauchamp, whom he had encountered that morning? Somehow he held her hand in silence, regarding her thoughtfully; and Diana was the first to speak.

"I have quite recovered from my undignified tumble of this morning; Mrs. Battle says I shall feel the effects in a few days; shock to the system, and so on."

Diana's manner was slightly accentuated,

and an indifferent observer might have said she was nervous. Sir Blaise, too, as he led her to a seat, continued either absent, or very much present—extremes are so difficult to decipher under any form.

“Dear, dear!” said Mrs. Battle, as she sank into the extended arms of a Chippendale near Diana, “how very oddly Sir Blaise looked at you; never a word. What funny creatures men are—even the pick of them! But he is like a statue, and his very silence is handsome.”

Mrs. Battle’s stage whisper had caught the ear of Francisca Masters, who was sitting at no great distance, and who now made her way towards them.

“I am so glad to see you, Miss Beauchamp; let me sit down beside you, and talk. I feel like a kettle on the point of exploding; I’ve had nobody to speak to since we arrived. You see Cecilia is quite occupied with Mr.

Languedoc. Mamma little thought he would have been here, or Cely would not have been allowed to come. Oh! the wiles and ways of love. How did that man get invited? how did he find his way here? Now, I do beg of you to glance at his posture; he is sitting, turning up his face at Cecilia like a sunflower. And why should he select a footstool to sit on? Audacious, I call it; conspicuous to the last degree! Are there no chairs? No, there is an æsthetical meaning in all this—I am literally at your feet. No man should be at the feet of any living woman. However, we all know when the season of revolt comes on—directly the period of imbecility and helpless confusion (when the afflicted ones are treated as *non compos mentis* by their friends, and are not quite sure themselves whether such treatment is not merited) is over.”

Francisca's pre-Raphaelite hair and sunny

smile seemed to accord with her *badinage*, and Diana gladly swept her drapery aside as she made room for her on the sofa.

“Mr. Languedoc proclaims himself a singer of the future. He declares that all deep thinkers and strong singers have but a gaping audience at present. Cely vows she grasps him, but I vow she does not. I have watched her expression when he has been reading any MS. to her, and I assure you, when he throws up his eyes at the last line, poor Cely looks as vacuous as a French puff. He thinks he is as clever as Emerson; but if an American happens to be cultivated and a genius, you meet with a combination in him you will not readily meet with in England—a forward reach, as our American handles his metaphysics, unknown to English thinkers. At least, this is my little theory.”

“You are right,” said Diana reflectively.

“You are the most delightful urn a kettle ever let off its steam into—forgive a transcendental epigram, Miss Beauchamp. And now to start on another topic. Did you notice how oddly Sir Blaise greeted you? I think I know why. You, perhaps, have never heard the tradition connected with Whitefriars? All old places have traditions; and even the Restorationists can’t do away with them. Sir Blaise, when he looked at you in this white-flowered velvet, thought of the tradition; I know he did. I have studied his face since I was a child. Shall I tell you all about the tradition?”

“Do,” said Diana.

“Whitefriars was once a monastery, founded by a Panmure in the reign of Mary.

“Sir Sholto Panmure, the founder of the Order of Whitefriars, had been a wild man,

and had done many deeds for which his conscience upbraided him. In a street brawl he let off a pistol and shot a man, this man turning out to be his most intimate friend. However, the affair was hushed up, for it was done in the mad frolic of a masquerade; but Sir Sholto was inconsolable, and the more so for one dominant reason—he loved, and was loved in return, by the sister of the man he had shot. The name of the lady was Hortense di Cantilupe, an Italian family who had come over to settle in England, being connected in some way with Mary's Court.

“Hortense was inconsolable for the death of her brother by the hand of her lover; so much so, that she said she could never marry Sir Sholto.

“Many and various were the scenes between the lovers. I have read all about it in old family records in the library—(before Sir Blaise

met with the accident, hunting, Cely and I used to roam at large here). At last Sir Sholto, in a fit of despair, founded the monastery of Whitefriars, and became the head of the Order. In the old chapel you can still see the stone worn away by the knees of Sir Sholto as he agonized over his past misdeeds.

“Hortense could not live far distant from her lover. She built a cottage (the remains of which I will show you one day) at the foot of Whitefriars, and, garbed in white, watched and prayed, only stealing forth at night to wander round the grounds of Whitefriars.

“When Sir Sholto died, she is said to have thrown herself, in a passion of despair and love, on his body, and there died. They were buried together, like Eloïse and Abelard of old ; but 'tis said, on misty nights, when the pale damps come stealing over the fields, a White Lady is seen to glide towards Whitefriars, and a wailing voice

is heard to whisper forth the name of 'Sholto! Sholto!' When this occurs, Nature seems to be shaken with emotion, for the trees toss their arms towards each other, and 'sough' a dirge in their branches, which terrifies the listeners."

"Nature sympathizes with us in our sorrows," said Diana, "stretches out her arms towards us. I always feel it to be so. What a strange story—yet how interesting!"

"Well," said Francisca, "perhaps 'tis more sad than strange, though, of course, I don't for one moment believe about the White Lady. Still I am glad that in death they were not divided; but you gave Sir Blaise a shock, and he *did* think of the tradition when he saw you."

A string band had been playing at intervals, the instruments being just far distant enough to make the music exquisitely dreamy. Now

and then, as some strain, more subtle in its action than others, stole in upon the crowd of laughing and chatting men and women who were moving about in easy conversation, or wandering in and out of the conservatories, which led out of the drawing-rooms, a "hush" crept in, which memory or some divine foretaste filled.

How marvellously our natures respond to the vibrations of strings, or the breathings of instruments! We are lulled, invigorated, saddened, or made glad. And so it is with all Art. What a witness to our immortality is the moral influence of some great work which has sprung from a painter's brush! Take Munkacsy's Christ; who can gaze unmoved before the simple dignity of that matchless figure clothed in white? Who can look, without a contraction of heart-pain, at the calm, yet questioning, brow of the Saviour,

at the deep pity and infinite tenderness in His eyes, as He stands before the cowering Pilate, in whose heart a tempest of fear and desire is raging?

“An extraordinary picture!” said one, as he stood before it. He had come into that quiet room, where it was on view, from the hurry and bustle of the streets, and he wist not what to say, as the spell of that grand picture caught and enchained his eyes. “Verily an extraordinary picture! But our planet has been the scene of an extraordinary enactment, which the denizens of other planets might well desire to look into.”

“What is Sir Blaise about?” said Francisca suddenly. “He is moving a table, and taking his place behind it, as if about to make a speech; has he caught the mania for recitation? But how pale he looks! What can he be about?”

Various eyes were directed towards Sir Blaise, and every countenance manifested curiosity.

Diana's lips parted in an exquisite smile. How she came to know what he was about to say, who can tell? Sir Blaise and she were almost strangers; yet are there not spirits which have known each other long in some strange realms of thought who, meeting, meet as those meet, in an intimacy which is independent of time or circumstance? Yes, Diana knew. The question she had asked that Spring night not long ago, of the crescent up above, of the heavens thick with kingdoms, of the nightingale as it jug-jugged in the mysteries of song, was about to be responded to. Sir Blaise had surely found the answer to his quest.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONFESSIONS OF SIR BLAISE.

“Men have their metal as of gold and silver. Those of you who were the worthy ones in the state of ignorance, will be the worthy ones in the state of faith as soon as you embrace it.”

A MURMUR of voices, a flutter of drapery, a focussing of glances, and Sir Blaise had commenced his recitation.

“My friends, you wonder what I am about to say; you will probably wonder still more when I say what I have to say. I have anticipated the various censures which will be passed upon me. I know how I should once have regarded this entering into inner

experiences, which some hold too sacred to mention, and some cannot tolerate, associated with scenes such as *this*. But to every rule there is an exception; and I claim this exception to-night—for, surely, a man to be a man must act up to the convictions which hurry him along with resistless force.

“Such force is urging me to tell the friends amongst whom I have grown into maturity—the friends to whom I am linked by many endearing ties—the ties of a common interest in this fair Herefordshire, where our landed interests are vested; the ties of college friendship in some instances, and school-day adventures in others; of hunting bonds; besides those countless other mingled influences which bind beings together.

“You know that from that morning when I was carried from the hunting-field I have lived a life of seclusion. You have com-

mented on the reason. You have deemed me discourteous and morose when all your kind inquiries invariably met with the same response.

“I want to-night to tell you *why* I could not see you. Why I shut myself up within myself—why I became thus metamorphosed.

“My friends, I had, like the Knights of Arthur’s Court, gone in search of the Holy Grail; and till I found it I could not rest. I was prepared to leave all to find it, to shun past pursuits if they would hinder my quest; to forego the smile of women, and the clasp of friendly hands. There are words we count ugly words in this world of ours; we endeavour to deck them with rhetorical elegances, or to smother them in rose-leaves, but they haunt us yet, and must as long as Time endures. The new philosophy endeavours to do away with the *one*, but no philosophy can do away with the *other*.

“When Death approached me, it was shrouded in the robes of night. No gleam of light transfigured its appalling aspect. I am not ashamed to confess my dread—the great men of the Ancient World shrank backwards at its approach. A Cicero ‘wrung his hands and wailed’ as he thought of it. A Cato viewed it with ‘calm despair.’ My hour had come at last, I thought; then my senses quickened as they never had before. I would have given many years for the promise of one year in which to find the Holy Grail.

“I had lived as if I were not mortal—as if Nemesis could never overtake me. Of the struggles of that time I can never adequately speak. I shut myself in the library, and read all that came to hand of the various schools of thought; but still the Holy Grail seemed as distant as ever. When should I see the vision I longed for? At last there came

before me the half-forgotten figure of a college friend of years ago. I wrote to him ; he came, and he has helped me.

“In the mystery of the Passion, I have found the key to all mysteries ; and in the Beatific Vision of the Christ, the answer to my quest.

“My friends, I could not endure that you should think that any motive but one so profoundly deep could keep me from amongst you ; so I have grasped this opportunity, when so many are gathered here, to explain all.”

Then Sir Blaise ceased speaking, and, with a grave yet happy smile playing about his countenance, moved amongst his guests ; and once more the strains of music floated in upon the somewhat startled and wholly puzzled people.

“Sir Blaise should go into Parliament,” said old bluff Squire Haddington ; “let him talk politics, not theology. We are not Germans

—directly the Germans get together they are off on theology of some sort. We don't understand this kind of thing—what is it all about? The parson does all my religion for me. I consider my pew-rent pays my fare to the other side.”

Then Squire Haddington laughed, and absolutely poked another old squire in the ribs.

“Politics,” said Squire Musgrave, “politics, I'm done up with them, most thoroughly and completely done up with them. It's all blame, whatever party is in power. Who's to blame for the rising of the skeleton in the house of Europe? The Liberals say Conservatives—the Conservatives say the Liberals; whereas neither party is at fault, 'tis our imperfect civilization is to blame. If we were all Christianized we should soon make up our quarrels. No, no; I call that little speech of Sir Blaise about the straightest bit of work

cross-country he has ever done ; he has spoken like a brave man—he has silenced all those absurd reports that have been circulated of one sort or another.”

“ What will Parson Barry say ? ” said Squire Haddington. “ It’s a pity he and Madam are off for their summer trip. I should like to have seen the old fox-hunter’s eye this night. He will have to trim up his sails a bit. I suppose Panmure will throw up the mastership of the hounds. Tally-ho and psalm-singing don’t dovetail.”

“ Softly, softly, Haddington, my friend,” said Squire Musgrave. “ Sir Blaise’s well-known Tally-ho has rung out in unmistakable tones to-night. He has unearthed that wily old fox, Lucifer, and hurled a javelin at him. The Confessions of an Augustine could hardly awaken a greater sensation on a localized scale than the confessions of Sir Blaise this night ;

those words of his will live on in the memory of us men and women, unforgotten when our hour comes. They are words with a young Spring breeze in them, and the scent of laurels."

Squire Haddington gave vent to a long low whistle. He was a buffoon at heart, and a clown by nature. Circumstances had placed him where he was in society; but, though mounted tolerably high on the social ladder, he had an eye backwards, and would have subsided very comfortably a rung or two lower. Circumstances may dress a man in ever so gaudy a style; but beneath the apparel lurks the man. There he is; you can't mistake him.

The buffoon in Squire Haddington was the bedizened creature he had to subdue; the bedizened one had made him wallow in jests, and hold all that was lofty up to ridicule.

Of the many lords who had held dominion over him, none were so impotent as this buffoon. But, perhaps, no nation is so plagued with the buffoon as the English nation. He rises to his greatest heights in burlesque—the broader the fun the louder the laughter. Whenever three or four Saxoners are gathered together in convivial mood at the corner of the street, the buffoon comes along with them. How different is the vivacity of other nations! As subtle in comparison as the scent of a rose to an onion.

Persiflage is one thing, buffoonery another; but we have digressed too far. Squire Haddington's long low whistle ended that little conversation; and, shortly after, the guests melted away, and an unexampled evening amongst the evenings which Whitefriars had known was chronicled where all is chronicled.

CHAPTER V.

RIVULET, RIVULET !

"Sweet light is round you, soft sounds are in your ears."

MRS. BATTLE could get no response to the various comments she strung together during the drive home that night. The hush of Nature ever stilled Diana. The sublimity of distant worlds, the awful grandeur of the immensity of space, the sweeping darkness which threw up the ethereal light, the mystic rustling in tree-tops, the air scented with acacia, meadow-sweet, honeysuckle, sweet gale, Spanish broom, lime—all these surroundings affected her with a sense of the manifestation

of a great working power, not unseen, but visibly nigh.

“*This*,” she found herself reiterating, “*this* remains always beautiful—as dreamily beautiful under other aspects as Florence sleeping by the rushing Arno.” She was leaning her head half out of the fly, as it trundled along, for Diana could afford no carriage as yet: she was deaf to the repeated exclamations of Mrs. Battle.

“Dear, dear! I must see Mrs. Bovin and Miss Edwards to-morrow, and tell them Sir Blaise is about to take Orders, for of course he will go into the Church. What a handsome man in the pulpit, to be sure, to be sure! And what sermons he will preach! Won’t the ladies run miles! Dear, dear! Poor things, to be sure, to be sure! Well, well! it was a fine sight, a notable sight, to see Sir Blaise stand up and speak so calmly and

so beautifully. Won't Mrs. Bovin and Miss Edwards be taken aback when I tell them all? I'll go and have a cup of tea with them to-morrow; and Oh, Miss Beauchamp, how fond Miss Francisca Masters is of Sir Blaise; it's quite palpable—she does not attempt to conceal it.

“There is not a tithe of that retiring manner in these days which was the crowning perfection of maidenhood in my day—no eyes downcast, no blushing cheeks, I'm sure. Take Mr. Battle's courtship. You should have seen the bows and little-by-littles with which he gradually led me to *infer* he had centred his affections upon me. As for me, I was a timid creature, and nothing upset me more than the addresses which various gentlemen paid to me by innuendo and veiled compliment. Now I received a letter in poetry, and now a letter in prose, all couched

in terms which would now-a-days be considered very old-fashioned and extravagant.

“But to return to Mr. Battle’s courtship. How punctilious he was when he ventured to kiss my gloved hand! He said, ‘Martha, this is a moment of exaltation’; then Mr. Battle ventured on the like again, and so he won me. But Sir Blaise does not notice Miss Masters in any particular way; he is courteous to all ladies, but shows special favour to none.

“Oh, Miss Beauchamp, how well the white marble floors and pillars become you! If ever anybody looked like the right lady to be installed in *that* place, it is you. The Beauchamps and Panmures have never inter-married. Sir Golf used to repeat a queer tradition about a Panmure who fell in love with a penniless Miss Beauchamp, and they were separated through the opposition of the

parents. And some old doggerel is connected with the story—I hardly remember the lines—but they were something to this effect :—

*‘If a Panmure wed to a Beauchamp be,
The White Lady then to her rest will flee.’ ”*

“The White Lady,” said Diana, drifting back from the confines of those dreamy speculations she delighted in ; “I heard all about her to-night ; her name was Hortense di Cantilupe.”

“Di what ?” said Mrs. Battle, bending forward with terrible earnestness.

“Di Cantilupe,” reiterated Diana.

“That is Mr. Cantilupe’s name Italianized, Miss Beauchamp. No wonder he is like a wraith, coming from such uncanny stock. Mark my words, his real name is Di Cantilupe, and he is a twig off that ill-omened tree : he looks like a Frenchman or an Italian ; but



these Latin races are all alike—names and faces and ways.”

Then Diana laughed till the old fly seemed to participate in her merriment, and rumble and rattle and squeak in chorus.

“Mrs. Battle, you have an unduly developed imagination in one quarter, and a dwarfed structural arrangement in another. ’Tis monstrous this aversion you have invariably shown towards a really very pleasant man—a man in whose conversation I find pleasure. He unites a cultivated intellect to a very feeling heart; for just think how kind he has been to me.”

“Measure for measure, grain for grain, he will have it back again; he will be paid in his own way and in his own time; he will make dainty choice of his pay. If it were a scalp he would have it; if it were a heart he would have it. Poor dear Mr. Battle used to

say, 'Martha, I have the greatest confidence in your eye. I have a hop-buyer coming down to-day, come you in and see if the man's good for his money.'"

"How came it," said Diana, "that hops turned out a failure?"

"How, indeed, Miss Beauchamp! But, as I said before, blight will rot a peach on the wall or a hop on its pole indifferently. Blight is a malady for which as yet we have found no cure—blight and mildew. We are but dunces yet for all our boasted learning."

"Yes, we are but dunces at the best," said Diana, once more giving herself up to the full measure of her delight in the scented languor of the summer air, as it blew the russet-coloured hair, which waved across her forehead, into playful disorder.

"Sir Blaise will take Orders and perform the services in his own chapel," said Mrs.

.

Battle, returning to her *moutons*; "he has never had a private chaplain, strangely enough. He will turn as devout as his ancestor, Sir Sholto, the praying friar, who wore away the stones."

"I heard about him," said Diana, waking up once more.

"Miss Masters would tell you all about it; a little gossip is she. Yes, Sir Sholto was in awful earnest about his soul, 'twas said. He lacerated his poor body, and washed the feet of beggars. A great saint was he. To think that grand place was once a monastery, and crowded with monks! Sir Sholto was a man of mighty influence. Many gay fellows from Mary's Court followed him to Whitefriars. Sir Golf had the records of the Panmures as readily at his finger-ends, if not more so, than that of the Beauchamps. On winter nights, over the filberts, he would tell me

long stories. He said Sir Sholto was called, at Mary's Court, 'Beauty Panmure.' I'm sure Sir Blaise might be called 'Beauty Panmure' also. Would that he were as much in your presence, Miss Beauchamp, as Mr. Cantilupe! Then I should have no fear, but be happy."

Diana was smiling. But Mrs. Battle did not see that smile; she had hidden it by drooping her head into the heart of the bouquet of damask roses she carried in her hand.

Mrs. Battle paused in expectation of some sort of answer; but Diana seemed not to have noticed her remark. She commenced to talk about flowers, and said she should draw up a calendar of them, and present it to Mrs. Battle; she should become as learned in botany as Linnæus.

The rumble of the fly did not facilitate this style of conversation, and Mrs. Battle did not pretend to follow it. Diana had,

however, succeeded in veiling a sentiment which was as yet but a sentiment, but which, like a bubbling stream hidden in the hollow of a rock, had commenced to flow in one direction, and could no more deviate from its certain end than the swiftly-flowing river can be impeded in its onward course by a heap of stones flung at its naked bosom. Mrs. Battle's cap, with its white marabout feathers and crested aigrette, was nodding placidly, long before Diana had recovered from that suggestion which had quickened the tiny rivulet into conscious life, and sent it trickling onwards, humming as it went.

Oh ! Rivulet, Rivulet, whither are you going ? Your music will grow deeper, grander, as you flow ; it will come across many a stretch of dreary land, perchance, which it will turn into pasturage, where cattle will graze on the meadow-sweet, watered by your bounteous-

ness; it will flow on and on to its great bourn—on, on, till it rushes into the mighty embrace which awaits it. Will it be a course of joy or pain—Rivulet, Rivulet?

How half-conscious we are of these new births within us. A word, a deed, and we are launched on some new expedition. We grope about within ourselves with a half-knowledge of ourselves; we place our hands at the hole of the babbling stream, and cry, “I have stemmed it over”; and then in childish dismay we hang our heads with shame as we see we have but made the streamlet babble forth in louder, lustier song, as mockingly, mockingly it flows by our baby impediments to its bourn, to its bourn. Oh! Rivulet, Rivulet, can we stay you? Is your song a song of joy for Diana, or is it a song strung to pain?

CHAPTER VI.

TRUE PHILOSOPHY.

"There is also the Divine."

FOR once a conclusion arrived at from haphazard surmises was right. Sir Blaise Panmure would read for Orders, and would be ordained. Mrs. Battle, for once, had leapt to a perfectly true conclusion.

On the morning after the "At Home" we have just described, Sir Blaise and De Quincey sat somewhat longer than usual at the breakfast table. They had been discussing this very point together, and looking at it from every possible angle.

"Is it not too tied-down a life for me?" said

Sir Blaise. "Why should I not work away in my own line; give drawing-room meetings, if you will, and open-air meetings likewise? Imagine me, my dear fellow, a curate, allowed to run as far as my vicar permits me, and no farther."

"Organization in all things," said De Quincey. "Now, more than ever, we require such men as yourself in the Church—men of wealth and position. I have sought the missionary fields, because I consider any gifts I may possess are needed there."

"Many would say you are lost among the heathen," said Sir Blaise.

"Then they would speak ignorantly," said De Quincey; "one must be a close and subtle reasoner to argue with a cultivated Hindoo or an astute Chinaman; in fact, a missionary, to do great work, needs almost as many accomplishments as an Admirable Crichton. He

should know many languages, be a musician, a painter, an athlete—then the heathen would be caught by shoals in the Galilean net. Our best should be exported. Some of our best have been exported. Take Selwyn and Pater-son; these men the heathen revered almost as gods.”

“True,” said Sir Blaise; “we must not grudge you, De Quincey.”

“This autumn I am off to South Australia, to work amongst our own heathen out there. When an Englishman sinks he is more utterly degraded than a citizen of any other nation.”

De Quincey’s countenance was lighted up with subdued fervour as he spoke. He had a pure and noble brow; he seemed to have attained some inward heights, where the restless soul sits calmly surveying the hurrying world below with compassion and desire, yet

with no further contact with its passions, its hopes, or its fears. What Gethsemane had brought him so far on the spiritual road, it concerns us not to meddle with. That hours of meditative prayer watered his soul and produced these mystic flowers of peace and joy, which can only grow to perfection in the climate of prayer, was manifest—such men are witnesses in themselves to the truth of a supernatural power. They are the spiritual athletes who command our admiration.

“In six months I can be ordained,” said Sir Blaise; “I have taken my degree and kept my terms. After a lapse of years, it will seem curious to be back again in the rooms at Oxford. I shall take a curacy at the East End, I think; I want to see human nature in its ugliest form. I want to feel the wildest, saddest pulse of the national heart. How can I preach of the problems of life till I have

sounded, through others, the key-note of these mysteries ? ”

“ You have spoken truth, Panmure ; with little knowledge comes the cynicism of this critical generation ; the preachers of the new school think they are the finders of a new philosophy, whereas they are rushing farther and farther into the mists, which will only clear away at the touch of Faith. Wagner, the founder of the music of the future, thought he had discovered a new Art.

“ ‘ *Jetzt haben sie eine neue kunst,* ’ said he. What has he said since ? The *Ring of the Nibelungs* is a mistake ; in *Parsifal* he returned to the old paths—the paths of melody and perfect harmonies. To the beautiful, simple, immortal law of real Art.

“ So it will be by-and-by with our new philosophers, when the madness of their unshackled freedom of speech is over. When

they have drained their philosophies to the last dreg they will cry out, 'It is a mistake.'

"After all, the old truths are the best, and they will begin to build up the old structures, and once more people will understand what they preach. The true philosophy preached by the Christ sinks into your heart, and commences, like beneficent rain, to break up the fallow ground; the false philosophy which the advanced teachers of the new cult preach, may get up into your head, and fill you with the dreams of an opium-eater. It will act on you after the same method. When the dreams are ended, come sickness and death.

"Picture the new philosophy striving to enter into the warp and woof of the lives of the toiling poor, with its grand phrases and impossible tenets. Picture the horny hand of a navvy turning over the pages of a

Schopenhauer. Well might he turn round and say, 'I asked bread of you, and you give me a stone.' The Church has reared us amidst her rites and pomps. Let us do her behest in the way she points out—I to labour amongst the heathen, you to labour at home."

CHAPTER VII.

PROBLEMS.

" Incident ought not to govern policy, but policy incident."

" It is for man to tame the chaos on every side whilst he lives, to scatter the seeds of science and of song, that climate, corn, animals, men may be milder, and the germs of love and benefit may be multiplied."

" DENE CLOSE,

" Thursday, 10 a.m.

" DEAR MISS BEAUCHAMP,—

" You seemed so interested in the legend of Hortense di Cantilupe last night, that I should like to read it to you from the MS. at Whitefriars. Sir Blaise has renewed his permission with regard to my going whenever I feel inclined to the library—it's worth

running riot in—you can pick up a pretty fair amount of knowledge amongst his priceless books. Any little learning I can boast I gathered there.

“Will you drive with me this afternoon at four o’clock?”

“Yours sincerely,

“FRANCISCA MASTERS.”

“Yes, I will,” said Diana, making instant and affirmative response.

Mrs. Battle did nothing but smile over store-closets and cupboards that morning. She was a romantic old dame, after all; she had a notion wedged in somewhere—it was a pretty notion, she thought—and likely enough her smiles continued till after luncheon, when the following exclamations escaped her as she stood at the dining-room window, puckering and flouncing her brows out of all harmony.

“Here he comes!—here he comes!”

“Who?” said Diana.

“Mr. di Cantilupe (of course that’s his real name), the White Lady’s descendant—I was going to say ancestor—he always puts me into confusion.”

Diana rose, and looked with less serenity than usual at the figure advancing; the grand trees embracing each other, and the cloudless smiling sky, greeted him with more of welcome than Diana that day.

“*Ingrat!*” she whispered to herself, as she entered the drawing-room; “how much he has done for me, and yet——”

What did she read in the welcome *he* gave *her* declaration?

Yes; Mr. Cantilupe had been twisting about those three problems which he had found the most tiresome mathematical calculations, to bring out satisfactorily after the manner of

other problems. He had come to make a declaration, and he had decided to veil it in such metaphorical language that if Diana did not respond in some fashion, it should be so abstruse and mistily worded that it could be viewed as the reflection of a declaration.

"I thought I saw Diego behind you," said Diana, as she withdrew the hand Mr. Cantilupe had detained a second longer than usual, gazing abstractedly at the form and sculpturing and fashioning of it.

"Yes, Diego is staying at the 'Green Man,'" said Mr. Cantilupe; "he is often in this neighbourhood now."

"Why?" said Diana surprisedly.

"Is Miss Beauchamp guilty of metaphysical questionings? *Why?*" Then Mr. Cantilupe fixed his gaze on the carpet, and was silent.

"Yes, why?" bursting into a merry laugh. "I think it is so strange. What attraction

can Diego have about here? Is he, too, a Herefordshire man?"

"Diego's attractions are always connected with *my* attractions," said Mr. Cantilupe. "Diego is a description of surplus *me*, his individuality is the overplus of mine; *deduct* some meaning, if you will, from this speech."

"Enigmatical and mystic as usual," said Diana. "You surely have not sprung from a bucolic ancestry? You *cannot* be English."

"Perhaps I date from the pyramids," said Mr. Cantilupe.

"Perhaps so," said Diana; "but more likely from the Romans." Then she thought of Hortense di Cantilupe.

"Should I find increased favour in your sight if I could proclaim myself an Etrurian?" said Mr. Cantilupe, bending forward and smiling with his best smile at Diana.

“ I love the Etrurians,” said Diana. “ I love them on such a big scale that I could not individualize such love—could not.” She was laughing back at Mr. Cantilupe, whose smile had shifted its costume.

“ Ah ! love that is so big is not rare enough to satisfy the Etrurian in me,” said Mr. Cantilupe. “ Let me pass beneath your notice as a member of the ‘bucolics’; but do not be too national in your love. May I repeat my question, and say, ‘ Shall I find increased favour in your sight if I proclaim myself an Englishman ? ’ ”

“ I admire the English,” said Diana ; “ I admire them on such a big scale that I could not individualize such admiration.”

Mr. Cantilupe’s smile had shifted its costume once more—he had many smiles.

“ See,” said he, “ I have brought a pair of Chinese shoes for the ‘ golden lilies,’ as the

Chinese prettily call their wonderful feet. Will you wear them?"

"I will use them for mural decoration," said Diana. "Everything I possess of any value I immediately display on these walls."

"The rarest of your possessions, Miss Beauchamp, is 'power'; power to draw to yourself the passionate attachment of individuals who are not easily swayed in this form. Does this knowledge cause you pleasure or pain? The very unconsciousness with which you use this power renders it yet more invincible. You have the power to draw all that is best in a nature to yourself, and equally the power to draw all that is most despicable. Forgive me, 'tis so. Destiny is austere; but *fate*—what is fate? Food for imbeciles. All is possible to a mind resolved."

Mr. Cantilupe paused in his enigmatical

speech, and regarded Diana, who sat silent and somewhat pale, before him.

“Yes, fate is for imbeciles. To be resolved is to conquer one’s fate,” he continued. “Some men ask for much, some ask for little, because they are so prolific in themselves that out of the little they can make ‘the much.’ Give such men a tiny blade to cherish, and by-and-by it will blossom and flower into some rare and perfect fruit. A little love is enough for them, because ‘the little’ with them will become ‘the great.’ There is one description of love which is rare, rarer than genius itself. ’Tis a love which can embrace Time, for Time wins the day, steals the day to itself, and locks it in its embrace at last. Have you ever seen Time depicted as both the slayer and the lover of the day? There are some women of whom it may be said, ‘I have seen *the day*.’ To define is to be

philosophical. I will not define. Need I define?"

Mr. Cantilupe awaited an answer, more to dramatize his meaning than to win a response from Diana. Enigmatical speeches can be graciously waved aside, and she would not permit herself to be conscious of Mr. Cantilupe's meaning; for the consciousness would confront her with consequences which would endanger the goal for which she was working, and Diana was as set on conquest as any general at the head of his troops. There was a remorseless fervency in the eagerness with which she pursued her enterprise—a remorseless fervency which was ready to sweep away impediments even to pain. But such was Diana.

Mr. Cantilupe read her. He saw the struggle, and in the struggle he descried hope. "She uses me! In using me I have some

claim on her generosity ; she will be conscious of such claims, and *then* the thin wedge can be well introduced. She has put aside my half-confession for her own ends, and is not altogether happy or pleased with herself." Mr. Cantilupe, strolling leisurely towards the window, was deciphering, with his usual accuracy, mental paraphernalia. He was at home when making an analysis of character, just as your Wörth is at home when he classifies your external paraphernalia, and adjusts you with such-and-such a *pose* in your niche. From one of the windows in the drawing-room at Beauchamp the towers of Whitefriars were visible, and it was at this window Mr. Cantilupe was standing. Waving his hand in that direction, he said, "What of your neighbour, Sir Blaise Panmure ? You were at his place last night."

"Yes," said Diana ; "but how do you know ?"

“I, like Napoleon, know most things. Events are made up of trifles—from the little to the big, everything goes by progression. What of those confessions of Sir Blaise?” Mr. Cantilupe had suddenly turned and faced Diana, and she, to her great annoyance, had crimsoned beneath his glance.

“You are going to Whitefriars this afternoon; I must not detain you,” said he, glancing at his watch.

“Napoleon’s method of obtaining knowledge of people’s movements, for instance,” said Diana, half amused and half vexed; “has he left it amongst military tactics to be practised *à discretion*?”

“Miss Beauchamp, I said just now fate is for the imbecile. Destiny is austere: written before me (perhaps I read them on the gates of Busgrane) I see ‘Be bold,’ and evermore ‘Be bold,’ and ‘Be not too bold.’ Be sure I

shall always mingle a few grains of discretion in my boldness. But your appointment is at three o'clock, and the old sun-dial in your garden keeps, I dare say, better time than our modern time-tellers ; it's like The Diana to love sun-dials and disdain watches.

“By-the-by, *à propos* of Whitefriars, did you ever hear the famous couplet?—famous in these parts—

*‘ If a Pammure wed to a Beauchamp be,
The White Lady then to her rest will flee ’ ?*

Why the White Lady should desire a union between these two houses tradition does not say ; but tradition invariably wears a lace veil. She half discloses her charms or half conceals her blemishes ; she is more interesting than history, because she appeals to our imaginations : facts blight the visionary.”

“I delight in tradition,” said Diana ; “there is something sacred in its wildest extravagance

to me. But is the White Lady your ancestress, Mr. Cantilupe ? ”

“ No confessions for me, Miss Beauchamp ; let us have to do with real men and women, and not with ‘ skipping ghosts.’ ” Then Mr. Cantilupe held Diana’s hand gracefully for half a second, and was gone.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SONG OF THE RIVULET.

“Given absolute perfection in a world death-stricken, then, not merely as Plato said, ‘Must the good man suffer at the hands of sinners,’ but the ideal must be perfected by submission to the common doom of death.”

MR. CANTILUPE had left Diana in a very uncomfortable frame of mind. If she could have put off the drive with Francisca Masters she would gladly have done so. She wanted to think. She could no longer blind herself to the disagreeable truth that Mr. Cantilupe regarded her with the love of a lover. But would it be well to think?

Diana had no vanity; she had no lust of

conquest—no desire to make a physiological study of this man's heart. She was not like some of her sex, who thoroughly enjoy this branch of scientific phenomena, and who can trace a passion from its commencement to its close, watching it in every stage of its development with the cool discriminating glance of a practised investigator of the ethics of love. She enjoyed the friendship of intellectual men; but she had no desire to win them from the consideration of these abstract things to a personal consideration of her own attractions.

What should she do? *Do?* Well, the only thing possible—push aside this disagreeable consciousness, and work on till the Court was redeemed. Mr. Cantilupe had, after all, garbed his speech so oddly, and darkened his meaning so cleverly, that he had given her a lead.

She need be in no way embarrassed by the consciousness of his meaning ; if she desired not to understand him, he was perfectly prepared for her inability to understand him.

“This ambition,” she thought, “is it harmful ?”

But who can pause to weigh and measure when a coveted goal lies straight before them ? And then it was such a laudable ambition.

Diana’s musings had landed her at the window, and Francisca’s Shetlands were already in sight, so further thought on this subject must be kept in abeyance ; and then, with a sudden revulsion, Diana was glad of it — glad of the drive, glad to get away from the recollection of the dynamic power of the glance with which Mr. Cantilupe had regarded her, as, pausing for one second at the door, he had again bowed as he left her presence.

“After all,” she thought, as she greeted

Francisca with an absolute unconsciousness which can make our words and the words of others as void as space,—“after all, it may not be love he feels for me; it may be a description of ambition to add me to his Art collection.”

And then Diana took her place beside Francisca, and tried to feel as if in this matter she was moving onwards without any volition of her own, as if the intermingling of her destiny with Mr. Cantilupe's was a possibility not to be regarded. *Her* path lay straight before her. One object filled it. If there was to be a garden in her life, a delightful garden, she would walk in it with other than Mr. Cantilupe.

Diana's eyelids had drooped. A dream-like sense was about her; but at last the repeated question of Francisca aroused her.

“How do you like my Cyprus cart? I

cannot lay claim to the possessive pronoun as a rule ; few are my possessions, but these four Shetland ponies and these rough pieces of wood slung together do really belong to me."

"It is perfection," said Diana, as she took her seat beside Francisca, and they drove off.

"If Sir Blaise would give me his three 'Skyes' the turn-out would be unique," said Francisca. "Did you go to the Dog Show at the Alexandra Palace this season? There was a good entry of 'Skyes,' and there was one Newfoundland set me 'a-thinking.'"

"Is that a rare occurrence?" said Diana.

"Well, somewhat," said Francisca. "You see I'm not particularly clever, though I ought to be with the run of the library we are going to this afternoon. My thoughts are like the twigs that float down streams, or the leaves that are blown hither and thither; as yet they have taken no root in the soil, so

there is no outcome. But to return to the Newfoundland that set me a-thinking. He was not a *dog* ; but a king. He held out his Royal paw, and compelled obeisance. It was all very well, to say to oneself you are *only* a dog. He made you feel to the tips of your fingers his magnificent condescension. I felt myself to be a little yelping human creature dressed up in clothes, while he was some great imprisoned Monarch entered at a so-called Dog Show."

Diana leaned back, and laughed ; she was glad of Francisca's babbling stream of easy-flowing words. Mr. Cantilupe's interview had altogether unstrung her, and she felt for the first time in her life a desire to escape from herself. The fretment of one human being on another was making itself felt. She had enjoyed his intellectual conversation ; she had experienced much pleasure in his society,

and now he wished to bind a chain about her. Must she forego her dearest desire? Must she resign her cherished hope? Must Beauchamp remain in the hands of the Jews? Diana felt like a leader who sees a short cut to victory, and yet feels it were better to forego that victory, because the particular road that leads to it may lead also to reproach. However, for this afternoon she would put aside the consideration of the subject, and give way to the delicious wooings of Nature,—Nature, with its sweet, external touch.

“You are grave, Miss Beauchamp. Gravity of this description hardly becomes you.”

Francisca was gazing intently at Diana; the gracious curvings of her moulded lips and chin, the glad yet shifting light in her eyes, seemed to be replaced by a mute sternness. Was this Diana? Diana straightened her lithe form, and smiled a little forcedly.

“I ought to wear a mask if my thoughts are so easily read.” Then she laughed, and the last cloud cleared.

“Now I will tell you a secret,” said Francisca, lightly touching up her gay little team. “Do you remember meeting Felicia Novello in London this season?”

“I believe I did see her at Lady Mary Charteris’,” said Diana.

“Just so. Well, she and I are going to start a Limited Company, like Besant and Rice, and write a novel. We shall take all our characters from life, and write what we know and see.”

“Shall you be afraid of the critics?” said Diana. “I know I am.”

“No!” said Francisca decidedly. “We shall have no matter-of-fact people in our book, so we shall require a little imagination, a little freedom from bias, a little abhorrence

of sectional lines, and a little dressing of originality to be brought to bear on us."

"Your demands are so modest, that I think you will easily find what you require," said Diana amusedly.

"I have seen a little character about here I intend to work into my book."

"Who is he?" said Diana lazily.

"You do well to count *character* as a male prerogative," said Francisca; "*he* is a dwarf, a very clever-looking little dwarf; he has a happy facility for climbing trees, and he haunts these roads, and talks to the lodge-keepers. I dare say we shall see him to-day."

"Are you quite sure he is a dwarf?" said Diana hastily.

"As sure as one can be of anything. Men of science tell us that our imagination clothes the world as it is. Things are not what they

seem ; perhaps my dwarf is a giant. There he is, I declare. Now, is he a dwarf ? ”

Strolling leisurely along the dusty road, with his head bent and his arms clasped behind him, was Diego. As Francisca tooled by, Diana endeavoured to catch his eyes, but he did not look up ; so checking the words that flew to her lips she said nothing, and Francisca, who never remained more than a few seconds on one subject, had darted off to another.

“ We *may* see Sir Blaise this afternoon. We will go straight to the library, and about five o’clock Vizard will peer in, and if he finds us there, in another few minutes tea will appear. Dear Sir Blaise ! I confess I love him hopelessly ; it’s very shocking to love a man who has no idea you love him, and has no idea of loving you ; but so it is. I’m not like Elaine — sweet Elaine ! No barge will

float down ye Herefordshire River bearing me on its bosom. Who but Tennyson, the most refined of singers, could touch a woman's confession of her love without alloy to spoil the gold? Who but Tennyson?

Yes, I love Sir Blaise; have always so loved him, for I have known him since I was a child. I used to bring my doll and sit in the library window at Whitefriars, and he would dress and undress it ninety times in an hour for me. I used to run away from my governesses, nurses, and paraphernalia, and secrete myself in the grounds. I was a naughty little girl, the despair of everybody—a wild creature, hating gloves and boots, and longing to boil a kettle by the wayside, and commit depredations. And now an immeasurable distance has come between Sir Blaise and me; *he* has entered a field of thought of which I seem to know nothing—experimentally.”

“You allude to last night,” said Diana dreamily.

“He is an impassioned man—once in earnest, and indifferent to public opinion,” said Francisca, “I think he might become like Savonarola.

“What wonderful men there have been in the world! None wholly good, but still great lights, pointing out in the darkness, and beckoning. These men have burning within them red flames; not the flickering pale attenuations which spring from waxen candles, but great lurid lights which blaze down the ages. They are power-loving men, if you will; they seek great ends, perhaps they are not too particular as to the means. The end obtained, the very means throw a reflected grandeur.

“Think of Savonarola!” continued Francisca, kindling with her theme. “See the

power he exercised over men. See them bringing their vanities to burn them in the cleansing fires. They brought the mad frolic of the Carnival, and laid it at his feet; their joys henceforth were to be pure joys. Did this man do a great work? In so far as he taught the people the law of self-sacrifice, he did a noble work. He was filled with a passionate faith, was he not? I desire to see Sir Blaise a great "light." From the moment he made those confessions last night, which sounded so strange to our conventional ears—ears which only respond to the tinkling bells of modern platitudes—my love was swamped to a great extent in ambition. I could have cried, 'Go forth with a clearer message than Savonarola, and deliver it.'"

With these words, Francisca's little team swept in at the grand entrance to Whitefriars, the gates of which to-day were thrown wide open.

“*This* is something new,” said Francisca. “What does this mean? Are the Jacks and Jills of all classes to disport themselves in the grounds whensoever they will? *Is* Christianity the great Republic?”

Francisca led the way to the library *sans ceremonie*, passing swiftly through one or two splendid corridors, from whose walls Panmures, in every style of dress and period of history, smiled or frowned down upon the pair.

“The Panmures had evidently a mania for being *canvased*,” said Francisca; “there is one gallery given up entirely to them; but that’s not sufficient, they look out from every nook and corner as well. Stop a minute,” she said, as Diana was passing on somewhat hastily, “here is a portrait of Sir Sholto before he turned friar. Is he not like Sir Blaise?”

Diana stood long, gazing reflectively at the

gay Cavalier of Mary's Court (he looked more fitted for Elizabeth's). Yes ; there was Sir Blaise, the same *fond gaillard* lighting up the eyes and playing about the strongly marked features, and the same enthusiasm irradiating the brow, which might lead him to the heights or the depths.

"Come a step farther, and you shall see Hortense," said Francisca, lowering her voice mysteriously, and advancing on tip-toe as if approaching an altar.

They had passed down a flight of steps, and entered a deep recess, which stood to the left of the central staircase ; a full-length portrait filled it, and before it hung a curtain of deep azure velvet.

Sweeping aside the drapery, Francisca displayed the wonderful beauty of Hortense di Cantilupe—beauty so ethereal and spirit-wrapt that, even in the somewhat conventional robes

of a maid-of-honour, she seemed more the child of the mists and the clouds than of earth.

“There is no beauty to me without a sense of mystery,” said Francisca. “In Hortense my meaning is explained. The shadow of a great thought is in her face. You looked like this last night, Diana. Indeed, you resemble the White Lady. Could you love like this Hortense?”

Without awaiting an answer to her pertinent question, Francisca dropped the curtain over the picture once more, and said, “Let us hasten to the library; I’ve so much to show you there. How do you like me as *cicerone*? Confess I’m not so awful as those awful men who do guide at abbeys and celebrated places. When we were looking over Rosslyn Chapel last year, one of these terrible birds of prey picked our intelligences clean away. How he

tapped his foot on hollow ground, and croaked of tombs beneath, and pointed with a fore-finger, armed with a cruel nail, at the *prentice* pillar!

“What do you think of this library? No room for pictures here. Books, books—nothing but books. All the record that is left of nations and peoples is crowded here.”

Diana had taken a seat in the window, and was looking silently round.

Yes; it was a room in which to think, and after thought had germinated, to bring forth some grand crowning action, and hurl it into the seething cosmos to work its end.

Greece is here—the living Greece of the past, not the dead Greece of the present. Italy is here—the Italy that Dante knew, and that Angelo turned into a colossal Art garden. Here lies the thought, too, of ancient man—the thought of the Pagan, childlike, worshipful

—seeing a God in the mountains, streams, lakes—seeing something so supernatural in Nature that they must needs fall down before it in adoration. A blind worship, if you will ; but, perhaps, less blind than the worshippers of the reign of law.

If we had lived in a coal-cellar all our lives, and were brought out one summer day to see sunrise over an Alpine range, who knows but we might fall down and worship that sun, thinking it some glorious god travelling through the heavens in garments spun in light ? We grow materialistic by the very familiarity of supernatural surroundings. We live midway 'twixt heaven and earth, but our thoughts cleave earthwards by the force of gravitation. 'Tis not till the strings that bind us are cut one by one that we can mount and soar, and cast off our heavy cloakings. Paganism is an allegory ; but an allegory is the



forward-thrown shadow of the truth which lurks behind. Paganism has truth at the bottom of all its rubbish, like Hope at the bottom of Pandora's box. Better Paganism than Materialism; better *something* to worship than *nothing*.

"It's no use, you are in a silent mood; and if Miss Beauchamp chooses to be silent, she will be silent," said Francisca.

As she spoke, the door swung wide, and Sir Blaise, followed by Mr. De Quincey, entered.

"I saw the Shetlands," said Sir Blaise, as he greeted Francisca with much cordiality, and Diana with a distinction which Francisca would have craved.

"De Quincey and I had intended running up to Oxford to-day, but we changed our minds. It's too bad of us to interrupt your studies, though."

"But for this library," said Francisca, "I

should never be known to posterity as the exponent of nineteenth century savagery. But for these elegantly-bound sometime rags which crowd these shelves, I should be a greater dunce than I am. I have brought Miss Beauchamp to see the spot where genius took fire."

"Have you shown Miss Beauchamp some of the most valuable MSS.?" said Sir Blaise.

Then he fetched one or two old vellum-bound treasures, and handed them to Diana.

"The work of monks," said he. "Is not the handwriting curiously cramped?"

Mr. De Quincey was talking to Francisca, and Sir Blaise stood facing Diana as she again sat down on the oak window-sill, with her back against the wainscoting. She was dressed in a white fabric, much trimmed with some old lace she had found in that cherished lumber-room. A few roses were clasped in the

Roman belt she constantly wore—it was a gift from the Pope to her; for the fame of Diana's recitations had even entered into Pontifical ears, and at his request she had recited privately before himself and his Cardinals, and the old man had given her this gem-set belt with his blessing; and Diana, prizing his gift, constantly wore it.

Looking at her as she sat there with her head bent over the ancient MS., and the perfect grace and pose of her figure bathed in the sunlight, Sir Blaise, whether consciously or unconsciously, felt what he had never felt before, felt what Adam felt when God gave him Eve—a great love for her.

Thus twice within the last few months had Diana struck on a mine; for *what* is love but a mine? You may dig and find the purest gold that ever passed the doors of the Mint, or you may dig and find little but gold-dust. The

mine may yield you its rich wealth all your life, or it may blow up and scatter you to a thousand bits. Oh ! it's dangerous work is this digging in the mines.

Looking up from those mouldy yellow sheets of crabbed writing, hard to be understood, Diana met her—destiny, if you will ; met the *one* man who could whisper life's grandest, deepest, sweetest mystery to her as the days go by ; met the *one* man at whose touch the divine music, the first note of which is struck in Heaven and found on Earth, would henceforth steal about her heart-strings, and ring out the entrancing strains of life's most sacred harmonies, or the wild dirge of a chant which had ended in woe—the *One* man.

Diana handed back the MS. in silence, and Sir Blaise took it as silently. Not a word had passed between them which would awaken consciousness in any onlooker that a babbling

stream was flowing onwards to its bourn, babbling and gurgling, as it went, of Love, of Love, of Love. Yet so it was !

CHAPTER IX.

TWO YEARS.

“Why do you speak so much to the purpose of that which is nothing to the purpose?”

“OUR friend, the dwarf, once more!” said Francisca, as they passed out at the Gates of Whitefriars. “He must have been lingering about the roads all this time. He is a person to inspire alarm. I’m glad we are in England—not Ireland.”

This time, as they drove swiftly by, Diego looked up, and fixed his small twinkling eyes on Diana, touching his cap at the same moment.

“You know who he is!” said Francisca

excitedly. "He touched his cap, and looked so strangely at you !

"Who ? What ? When ? Where ? I'm too excited to gather my thoughts into words. He has such an evil eye."

Diana was occupied with the fastening of her parasol, and when she did speak, she said somewhat coldly—

"He is the servant of Mr. Cantilupe."

"Mr. Cantilupe owns Cosmos Hall ?" said Francisca.

"I believe so, or has considerable interest in the speculation. Anyhow, he has been particularly kind to me ; in fact, I owe him much, as it is through him I hope to redeem Beauchamp. Of course you know, what everybody here knows, that it is mortgaged heavily ?"

"Of course I do," said Francisca, "and nobody admires your enterprise more than I do. This little dwarf, then, is Mr. Canti-

lupe's servant, and Mr. Cantilupe is your friend?"

Francisca paused. She longed to say more—she longed to know if Felicia Novello's report were true. But there is something in caste; and Francisca was sufficiently well bred not to venture into the private rooms of Diana's history.

When Diana reached home she found a letter from Mr. Cantilupe awaiting her; it had been written shortly after leaving her that afternoon. It ran thus:—

“THE GREEN MAN,

“4.30 P.M.

“DEAR MISS BEAUCHAMP,

“In the hurry of our interview to-day, I forgot to ask you to sign the enclosed document. I have calculated exactly how long it will take you to fulfil the aim for which you are working with so much enthusiasm. In

two years the goal will be reached ; but I cannot make my plans with regard to a fresh lease of Cosmos Hall, without your signature. I must know that you bind yourself to appear (unless illness prevent) during the period assigned.

“ You will not marvel that I make such conditions binding, when you consider that, as matters now stand, you may see fit, at any moment, to cease all connection with recitations ; and as you are the chief attraction at the Hall, and likely to continue so, I cannot incur the responsibility of renewing the lease, which the absolute owner now demands, unless I am sure of your continued attendance.

“ I have admired from the first your determination to redeem Beauchamp, and I feel sure that no butterfly pursuit will drag you from a great object. In two short years, those glorious trees will be absolutely yours, and the ancient fabric rid of pestilent mortgages.

“After carefully perusing the enclosed with your lawyer, sign it, and return it to me.

“I am, always yours,

“CANTILUPE.”

Mrs. Battle, finding Diana did not respond to the gong which had sounded at the usual hour for dinner, went upstairs and knocked at her door.

“I will not dine this evening, thank you, Mrs. Battle,” Diana responded from within.

“Are you quite well, Miss Beauchamp?” said Mrs. Battle anxiously; and then she ventured to try the handle of the door, which, however, she found locked.

“I am quite well, Mrs. Battle; *quite* well. Only I don’t want any dinner to-night,” said Diana again.

“Dear, dear!” Mrs. Battle repeatedly ejaculated as she descended the staircase.

“When people turn against their food there is something the matter with them, *that’s* clear. Heart, or head, or digestive organs—one of the three. Now, which of the three is it? Oh! dear, dear! What a puzzle life is! One is *always* hitting one’s head against something one can’t understand. Heart, or head, or digestive organs, these swell the doctors’ bills between them. If we had no hearts, we should do well; if we had no heads, we should do better; and if we had no digestive organs, we should do best. That’s my poor opinion; but my opinion is of no account—I’m only Martha Battle.”

Diana sat at the window of her bed-room, her head leaning on her hand. She sat in the same attitude for long. Nature was busy at her work. Night was softly approaching. Now a world revealed itself, and now a constellation of worlds. Now the moon looked

down with a rosy face. Harvest was close at hand—Nature's jubilee. The moon's round stare was full of questionings. The children of earth have their harvest, too. What of the harvest? The blind flap of bats' wings made dull vibrations in the air. A fragrance of roses was carried by a passing breeze. Sound and sight and sense were all, doubtless, passing within as Diana sat there. For, however pre-occupied we may be, we are never impervious to impressions; they are stealing about us with certain steps, and long, long after they may stir us to a madness of recollection.

This absolute stillness which had crept into Diana's soul—what was it? Was it not the prelude to an awakening, such as Nature feels when the spring sun has kissed it into such fervency of bliss that the flowers wake into being, and the trees into bud, and the birds into an ecstasy of song?

At last she rose, and, clasping her arms above her head, looked out into the night, and with one long, dreamful sigh, turned away. Then lighting a swing lamp which hung from the ceiling, she re-read Mr. Cantilupe's letter carefully, questioningly ; then paced the room with slow, measured steps several times, as if counting the cost of each syllable of that letter.

“Two years—two little years, and my goal is reached. Two years—two little years, and the ‘Beauchamps, of Beauchamp,’ are out of the hands of the Jews. Why should I hesitate ?”

This time she paused in her pacings to and fro before the escritoire ; blotting-book, paper, ink—all invited her. She sat down and wrote her answer.

“ BEAUCHAMP,

“ 10 P.M.

“ DEAR MR. CANTILUPE,

“ Two years will seem like two days, with such an end in view. I have signed the document, without consulting any lawyer. I have mastered the contents, and am perfectly satisfied with those contents.

“ Many thanks for your continued liberality and kindness.

“ Always yours sincerely,

“ DIANA BEAUCHAMP.”

Then, after folding and directing her letter, Diana unlocked the door, and descended the staircase, with a step so buoyant, that Mrs. Battle, sitting in the drawing-room, pretending to read, felt that she was hitting about in the dark more helplessly than ever.

Neither heart, head, nor digestive organs were

the words she found herself reading on the pages of her open book.

Miss Austen had not composed them; they found no place in "Emma," which Mrs. Battle was construing.

"Emma" might marry anybody she liked. Mrs. Battle had lost all interest in her. She was puzzling out Miss Beauchamp's unusual behaviour.

When the beings with whom we live become inscrutable to us, when we feel that they are drifting away in some strange bark, and that somehow they are forgetting to stand and wave to us as they float farther and farther into the distance, we stretch out our hands, if we love them, with a mute cry—a cry which in its very minuteness can never recall them.

Mrs. Battle was incapable of such sentiments. She was eminently practical, and practical people are never imaginative. She

was disturbed because Miss Beauchamp had shown an indisposition for any dinner. *This* was her grievance. Any deviation from the routine of meals seemed to her like opening the floodgates to every kind of evil. She shut up Miss Austen's "Emma," and peered into the dimly-lighted hall.

The hall door stood wide open. Miss Beauchamp had probably gone for a stroll in the flower garden. Evening damps, and no dinner! Mrs. Battle must use remonstrance. She took her *coup* hat from a peg, and, tying the strings, determinately sallied forth.

"Homespun, Homespun, you have yet to find me out," said Diana, as they met in the untrimmed walk which still went by the name of the 'Rosary.' "I have *mes nuits blanches*, like Heller. I want to walk miles to-night. I would choose a wild, desolate wilderness. I

think such a scene would discipline me. I feel so luxuriantly gay, I want to remember that life has two faces: the pale face, full of haunting fears, and the rosy face which has caught the reflection of the sun."

"Walk miles with never a morsel of food since luncheon to support you, Miss Beauchamp, and the clock on the stroke of eleven! What next, what next?"

"Come," said Diana, "let us go in, and to-morrow I will show you I can still appreciate a *plat*."

CHAPTER X.

A TRIANGLE.

"We keep each other in countenance, and exasperate by emulation the frenzy of the time."

WHILE the finely-spun webs which make up the rare clothing of inner experiences were being deftly woven into the pattern which would henceforth mark them off distinctively, a very different style of weaving was going on in the drawing-room where Mrs. Bovin reigned supreme amongst the upper town-folk. Mrs. Battle had found her way thither, accompanied by Miss Edwards, upon whom she had looked in *en route*. For a downright gossip, three is better company than two:

the triangle, after all, has a very perfect finish.

Miss Edwards, backed by 'Beeton's Universal,' could 'throw in' and 'throw out' when Mrs. Bovin's and Mrs. Battle's intelligences had become somewhat too diffusely intermingled.

Mrs. Bovin's china was proverbial. If the county folk had their jewels and lace, she had her Crown Derby and Dresden; and, furthermore, she did not display her kettles on the wall, nor her cups in cabinets: she kept her china in constant use, only washing every separate piece of it with her own capable hands.

"The generations before me were capable-handed people," she would say to Mrs. Battle and other admiring friends, "not afraid to dust a piece of mahogany, or show a round arm now and again; and because Mr. Bovin

has a trick of turning the colour of a silver piece by a glance at a title-deed, do you think I am going to fancy myself—a Jersey Lily, for instance ?”

On this particular afternoon, Mrs. Bovin was quite prepared for visitors. A bunch of gay roses, on whose petals a great bee was making desperate onslaught, and a cluster of dewdrops which no sun-rays would gather, decorated the left side of an arrangement in blonde and muslin, which for puffings and plaitings could hold itself unrivalled this side of the Channel.

Miss Edwards had a trick of running forward to greet you, and then accomplishing her retreat with a succession of hops. Mrs. Battle was always the same in and out of society—slow of movement; but those movements complete, and once set in motion, bounding on in full sail. She sailed down the

long narrow drawing-room of the Limes now.

“Delighted!” said Mrs. Bovin, as she greeted her; and then she repeated her exclamation to Miss Edwards, only pinching it somewhat. She was not so sure about triangular gossips as Mrs. Battle; but Mrs. Battle was cleverer than Mrs. Bovin, if a just measurement of brains and brain-forming matter had taken place.

“It’s some time since I was in Leominster,” said Mrs. Battle, taking off her gloves; for the golden hands of the French clock were approaching five, and the aroma of tea was in the air, and also of a very crisp and uncommon little tea-cake, the receipt for which had descended for many generations in Mrs. Bovin’s family; a tea-cake which was equally welcome in Summer and Winter, having certain properties which made it rise to an inconceivable lightness under a Summer sun.

“You have not been to see me since your return from London,” said Mrs. Bovin; “and I must complain. Complaining, Mrs. Dampy says, pay the doctors’ fees.”

“Oh! Mrs. Dampy,” said Mrs. Battle and Miss Edwards, laughing in Wagner-like discordances. “That’s just like Mrs. Dampy,” continued Mrs. Battle. “How is she?”

“Have you not heard?” said Mrs. Bovin.

“Heard what?” said Mrs. Battle, looking at Miss Edwards, who was perhaps studying a problem Beeton did not enter upon.

“The relict of the late Lieutenant is about to throw off her weeds,” said Mrs. Bovin, playing with the sugar-tongs; for tea had entered, and the hereditary cake too.

Mrs. Battle drew out a snowy handkerchief and placed it on her lap; it was folded in the square which laundresses approve, and Mrs. Battle shook it before she spoke. Then she

said, what she always said when collecting the scouts and followers of her great army of thoughts, "Dear, dear !"

"Oh ! it's true enough," said Mrs. Bovin. "Mr. Bovin is attending to settlements now. I hear there is to be a big settlement, *both ways*. Mr. Wimple is a very different man to the late Lieutenant. I remember, Mr. Bovin had all the arrangements of her first marriage, too ; and the poor dear Lieutenant remarked, 'Bother the settlements !'"

"Dear, dear !" said Mrs. Battle, who was still collecting her scattered forces.

"Mr. Wimple does not *so* express himself," said Mrs. Bovin. "He is an underwriter at Lloyd's ; so we shall lose Mrs. Dampy altogether."

"Wimple is the name," said Mrs. Battle, "at last. Well, I *am* surprised at Mrs. Dampy ; I thought her a superior woman."

“There are few superior women now-a-days,” said Mrs. Bovin. “Superiority is not marketable, I hear. However, *there* it is—the settlements are drawn up, and the banns published for the first time last Sunday in the parish church, Mrs. Dampy and Mr. Wimple sitting together in the foremost pew beneath the reading desk, *listening*. Now, what do you say to that?”

“I say, what I am constantly saying,” said Mrs. Battle, helping herself in absent fashion to the hereditary cake, “it’s all of one piece. I was telling Miss Beauchamp all about *my* courtship, the night before last. Courtship, in my day, was like the steps of a minuet. Was it not so, Mrs. Bovin?”

“So it was,” said Mrs. Bovin emphatically.

Miss Edwards, looking down, murmured, “Yes, yes,” and then hurriedly presented her cup for replenishment. So many courtships,

past and present, had been narrated to her, of so many and various forms, that she felt quite sure that she had come through the wear and tear, and vows and bows, and whatnots, of the entire arrangement.

“I should like to describe Mr. Wimple,” said Mrs. Bovin, “*only* I have no faculty for description.”

“Not at all surprising, dear Mrs. Bovin,” said Miss Edwards, who saw her way to score a point. “Not at all surprising; it is distinctive of the Saxon race. We bungle our descriptions of people, places, and things. Ask anybody to direct you somewhere in England, and I have illustrated my meaning. In the first place, they are strangers; in the second, they point in the wrong direction; and in the third, they really do know the spot, only, what with the first to the left, and the third to the right, and the second to the left

again, you somehow fail to grasp *their* map of locomotion.

“True,” said Mrs. Bovin; “still I will attempt to describe Mr. Wimple, because Mrs. Battle may then recognize him, if she meets him by chance. He has a neat foot—it looks as if it must dance; such pointed, skipping toes; and a big nose—aggressive nose—Mrs. Dampy will have to give way; and grey hair, and a black moustache.”

“Black and grey, an odd mixture, except as a tweed,” said Mrs. Battle. “What does that mean?”

“Means what it looks,” said Mrs. Bovin, smiling.

“Ah!” said Mrs. Battle, “poor Mrs. Dampy! The late Lieutenant was a very superior man—vastly superior to Mr. Wimple, I suspect.”

“I’m afraid so,” said Mrs. Bovin. “Is it true,” she continued, throwing herself back in

the little sandal-wood chair, which creaked and groaned beneath her weight; "is it true that Miss Beauchamp is about to be married to the gentleman who has introduced her to notice?"

"Miss Beauchamp required no introducing to notice," said Mrs. Battle, panting a little; "she is Miss Beauchamp, of Beauchamp."

"True," said Mrs. Bovin; "still she has stepped down from her pedestal when people pay their money to hear her recite. She stands, as Mr. Bovin says, in an isolated and peculiar position."

"Talent often lands people in peculiar positions," said Mrs. Battle, whose pantings were accentuated. "Talent turns a world upside down sometimes, and talent is not to be hemmed in by walls so high that their neighbours can't see over them. Talent will have an audience, Mrs. Bovin, and maybe the

world is its audience. Miss Beauchamp will soon have paid off the mortgage. We shall see what she will do then. Will you allow it's a grand achievement to set the estate free ? ”

“Grand, if she does not pay too dearly for it,” said Mrs. Bovin, pursing up her lips ; “but hearsay, hearsay—after all it's worth nothing.”

“You may contradict hearsay,” said Mrs. Battle ; “there is nothing whatever between Mr. Cantilupe and Miss Beauchamp. I have my own views for her ; whether or not I shall see them realized, I cannot say ; but a pretty little love-tale does not take long to spin, and is a pleasant pastime. Ah ! I've a spinning-wheel of my own, and the thread I use is fine and rare as Miss Beauchamp herself.”

Then Mrs. Battle untied her bonnet-strings, and sent them flying. Exasperating hearsay, and the day so warm, too !

Outside, hidden away in some corner of the

trim garden, a wild bird was whistling his long low notes, and linking them here and there in a chain of broken melody—a song of mingled Earth and Heaven; but the three ladies did not notice these wondrous harmonies, which are amongst the pure joys our earth distils; harmonies of sound and colour were lost on them—like all subtle things, they may pass by unseen. Many are the subtle forms of joy that pass us by because of our dulness and our dimness. We are but half conscious yet, the most delicately organized of us.

“You have heard about Sir Blaise Panmure?” said Mrs. Battle suddenly.

Mrs. Bovin was silent — silence means so many things.

“He will be a great preacher,” continued Mrs. Battle. “He will be a great man. He astonished us all last night. He explained why he has shut himself up for so long. He

knew all sorts of absurd reports were circulated. He silenced all the silly talk last night. He is a great man—a brave man. But no living man, in my estimation, could ever approach Sir Blaise, unless it was my poor dear Tricksee” (another of Mrs. Battle’s pet names for her husband).

This was too much for Mrs. Bovin; the bee on the rose began to flutter. She relinquished the gleam of wrath she had felt in the consciousness that Mrs. Battle had been at Whitefriars, in the absurdity of a comparison which affected her like a caricature, and commenced to laugh the easy laugh which Mr. Bovin found so soothing and restful after the crackles of parchments at his offices.

But Mrs. Battle had risen in some warmth, and Miss Edwards had followed her example. Even a triangle can get terribly out of tune, and have disadvantageous sides.

CHAPTER XI.

PLACID SYMPATHY.

“To be a-cocket, or talkative, is the humour most natural to women.”

“WHAT of our fair ex-client?” said Mr. Bovin that evening, as he faced Mrs. Bovin at dinner.

The table was bright with flowers and fruit, and Mr. and Mrs. Bovin looked the typical English couple, situated midway in the classification of class with class. Florid with a stationary floridness which was the natural product of the soil from which they had equally sprung—a soil which yields these

substantial and representative couples by the gross.

The union was a happy one. It was a union of placid sympathy. Mrs. Bovin had not a grain of combativeness in her disposition, and Mr. Bovin made up for this deficiency, for there was a cyclone within him now and then. The laziness of his summery aspect seemed to give a flat denial to such *choler*; but because a leaf scarcely stirs during an Eastern summer, is this a guarantee against the raging dust which will come whistling across the plain by-and-by, carrying in one wild tempest all before it? Mrs. Bovin had never witnessed the cyclone; but a dim consciousness is sometimes as full of conviction as a further demonstration. This grain of fear was wholesome; it kept her *just there*.

Mr. Bovin repeated his question, as he slipped first one well-covered member into one

pocket, and then the other; and lowering himself a few inches in the well-stuffed chair—which, in consort with Mrs. Bovin's chair, kinged it over the *suite* by virtue of certain bars and extra adornments—and spreading his feet beneath the table, thus prepared himself for the hour of the day when he could enjoy a mental stretch.

Mrs. Bovin leaned her left arm on the table, and with her right hand stroked a curl into position. She liked to toy with an answer to this question. She liked to show herself equal to a little lawyer-like parrying. It is impossible to consort with documents without profiting thereby.

Besides, she knew a certain smile with which Mr. Bovin greeted these little attempts of hers—a smile at once playful, promising, and productive. She could get a tiresome importunate little bill paid when he

looked like that, and she had been a *leetle* extravagant that summer; for Mrs. Dampy's gros grain was quite too presumptuous, and leading ladies in county towns have to keep up *their* position; the rustle of Mrs. Bovin's silk, as she swept up the aisle of the parish church on Sunday morning, must be a deeper, louder rustle than Mrs. Dampy's.

Mr. Bovin knew what was coming perfectly well; and Mrs. Bovin also knew that he understood her. Placid sympathy between married couples is not such a bad foundation, after all—this perfect prescience of one another on these very ordinary lines, and these little playful results. Matrimony, under such circumstances, will hold a few grains of lover-like reminiscences to the end.

“What of your fair ex-client, Mr. Bovin? Mrs. Battle was with me to-day.”

“Mrs. Battle is not my fair ex-client,” said Mr. Bovin, smiling.

“Mr. Bovin, I am leading up to your question, by informing you of the medium through which I have had my information.”

“Bravo!” said Mr. Bovin, removing his right hand from his pocket, and lazily helping himself to a little dry biscuit, which was supposed to be endowed with certain unrivalled digestive properties, if you happened to believe the advertisements which heralded its appearance as the Panacea Biscuit; “sometimes I begin (only begin) to fear you are about to become a clever woman.”

Mrs. Bovin smiled; Mr. Bovin was in high humour. She would not only get the gros grain bill paid, but she would have another and richer gros grain to obliterate the recollection of Mrs. Dampy’s gorgeousness from Leominster recollection.

“Mrs. Battle called, accompanied by the doctor’s sister,” continued Mrs. Bovin; “and they had tea with me.”

“Tea,” said Mr. Bovin; “why do ladies invariably gossip over tea? I daresay you all three gossiped.”

“You would rather not hear about Miss Beauchamp, then?” said Mrs. Bovin, glancing up at the ceiling in apparent forgetfulness.

This glance at the ceiling was well known to Mr. Bovin; it carried a long procession of such playful marital interviews in its wake.

“Mrs. Bovin,” said Mr. Bovin, “if this piece of mahogany did not divide us, I might pat your hand. Consider I have done so, and proceed.”

“Mrs. Bovin smiled again, and her eyes slowly wandered from the consideration of a fat Cupid playing with a ball in an obscure

corner of the ceiling, to a further consideration of the shining baldness of Mr. Bovin's head.

"Mrs. Battle looks well," she said, "very well. Living with Miss Beauchamp agrees with her. She is much attached to her."

"Ho! ho!" said Mr. Bovin; "I wonder if Mrs. Battle told you whom Miss Beauchamp intends to employ as her lawyer when I finally hand over all the documents connected with the estate."

"Have you ever regretted that afternoon's work?" said Mrs. Bovin, placidly.

"Regrets, my dear, have not a legal profile," said Mr. Bovin, helping himself to yet another Panacea Biscuit.

"I asked if the report of Miss Beauchamp's approaching marriage to Mr. Cantilupe were true," said Mrs. Bovin.

"Well?" said Mr. Bovin.

Mrs. Bovin again glanced upwards at the never-ending game at ball on the ceiling.

“Well?” reiterated Mr. Bovin.

“There is nothing whatever in it, and Mrs. Battle has authorized me to contradict such reports.”

“Well done,” said Mr. Bovin. “I’m unfeignedly glad to hear it. I am sufficiently interested in the niece of Sir Golf to wish her to marry a man, not a charlatan. That Cantilupe will come down like a sky-rocket on a damp night, some day. He is a mountebank——”

“Stop a bit,” said Mrs. Bovin; “don’t travel quite so fast.”

Mrs. Bovin gave her cap a forward pull; she was much pleased with herself. She began to think she had as good a head as Mr. Bovin; but supposing it was so, would he pay her bills so readily? As the question was doubtful, it

had better remain so ; for the result of such knowledge might open the floodgates to combativeness. And is not placid sympathy infinitely preferable ? Unquestionably it is.

Mr. Bovin looked up over his spectacles at his wife.

“ Take care ” to a lawyer, and “ Don’t travel quite so fast ” ; such developments, taking place after years of uninterrupted sympathy, were hardly welcome.

Mrs. Bovin, with one eye on the gros grain, and the other on Mr. Bovin, hastily explained herself—

“ I mean that I do not altogether credit Mrs. Battle’s contradiction, because she *was* so agitated, and I think such agitation appears to denote that there has been something—leastways it hardly denotes nothing.”

“ Miss Beauchamp is placed in a very isolated position,” said Mr. Bovin. “ Endowed, I *suppose*

—remember, Mrs. Bovin, I have injected that insignificant or profoundly significant word *supposed*, and therefore carefully guarded the approach to jealousy——”

Mr. Bovin was in high good humour.

“Endowed, I suppose, with considerable powers of fascination; endowed also with—yes—endowed with considerable *personal* attractions, she is placed, as I have said before, in a very isolated position. She has no gentleman to represent her. She has shown a decided will, and a determination to handle her own affairs, when I attempted to advise her as to the proper outlay of the considerable sum that mountebank, for some ends of his own, obtained by the sale of a supposed Vandyke—for who is to prove it is a Vandyke? Why, the entire collection of a *bric-à-brac* hunter turned out worthless the other day at a grand sale in Paris. I said just now, regrets have not a legal profile.

In office hours I do *not* regret that I informed her she must seek another lawyer; but when I am sitting in the position in which I now sit, I may give way to such regrets."

"Leave the affair to me, Mr. Bovin. I will call on Miss Beauchamp, and arrange matters—a reconciliation, if you will."

Mr. Bovin threw a crumb from the Panacea Biscuit at Mrs. Bovin; it was sportively done, and hardly became the dignified baldness of his years; but perhaps, like the Greeks, he was always a boy—out of office hours anyhow."

"What will you exact as your payment?"

"Oh, nothing," said Mrs. Bovin.

"Come! come! That would be hardly fair," said he.

Mrs. Bovin helped herself to a peach, and sighed.

Mr. Bovin knew what this meant; also he knew, by the depth of the sigh, the amount of the bill. This was a somewhat heavy sigh.

"I hope you don't feel unwell, my dear," said he, his eyes gleaming merrily under the rather hirsute eyebrows.

"Only a little harassed, Mr. Bovin"; and then the third sigh had come and gone.

"Say no more about it, my dear. You shall have a check to-morrow morning which will do away with all harassing sensations."

"Sign it *now*," said Mrs. Bovin, looking down; and he did.

Mrs. Bovin thought that peach the most luscious peach she had ever tasted, and Mr. Bovin an incomparable husband. She had always thought so; but a judgment becomes none the less rooted and impregnable for receiving further demonstration. Mrs. Bovin had no objection whatever to the constant repetition of such demonstration.

CHAPTER XII.

FLIGHT OR AVOWAL ?

1ST GENT.—“ *All times are good to seek your
wedded home,
Bringing a mutual delight.*”

2ND GENT.—“ *Why, true :
The calendar hath not an evil day
For souls made one by love, and even death
Were sweetness if it came like rolling waves
While they two clasped each other, and foresaw
No life apart.*”

WHILE Mr. and Mrs. Bovin were carrying on their own little conversational tactics, Sir Blaise and Mr. De Quincey were also sitting and exchanging thoughts on many interesting topics of this and past days, in the huge

dining-hall where the figures of the two men, as they faced each other from the north and south of the long table, looked hardly provocative of intimate discourse.

When the servants had left, Sir Blaise rose and took a seat close to De Quincey. Between these two had sprung up a perfect understanding. Sir Blaise felt he could wholly trust his friend; and De Quincey, whose character was moulded in sterner lines, found a sense of relaxation in their intimacy, which rested and refreshed his spirit.

“Do you think it would be contrary to Church discipline that I should take a wife, De Quincey?” said Sir Blaise, smiling.

De Quincey, looking reflectively at Sir Blaise, did not answer for several minutes. At last he said :

“Miss Beauchamp is singularly attractive. Whether such attractiveness would draw you

nearer or farther from the purpose of your life is a question which stretches away over a long piece of country."

"I knew you would connect my remark with Miss Beauchamp," said Sir Blaise; "and you are right. She has affected me differently to any other living woman. Two courses lie before me—flight or avowal. I am speaking unreservedly to you, as my custom is."

"Extreme courses are not, as a rule, the best," said De Quincey, "though there are circumstances which call for them. Why should you fly from some, perhaps, good and precious gift that may be destined for you? On the other hand, why should you not use that temperateness which God has meted out to you, and curb that desire for rash speech?"

"I feel," said Sir Blaise, "a great and unreasonable love for a girl of whom I know

absolutely nothing, except that she is carrying on a conspicuous career to redeem a heavily mortgaged estate. I have no desire to hide my sentiments. I feel like a boy—utterly simple concerning her. I would give much to throw myself at her feet and tell her all.

“De Quincey, love is indeed a mystery. I do not like Miss Beauchamp’s public career. I detest the knowledge that a hundred lorgnettes are directed at her I would call wife. But in this matter I feel myself to be urged impetuously onward. I chafe at the thought of consideration. I love her. Already she has made herself indispensable to me. I long to tell her of this love.

“If she rejected me, I should feel no bitterness—no rancour. I should know that a clumsy fellow like myself could hardly expect such condescension, for it would be condescension on her part. Miss Beauchamp

is far removed from me—I know it. Wealth will not atone for this, or position. The balance could never be correct. I appreciate her in every fibre of my being, though we have hardly spoken to each other.

“Now, what shall I do? Shall I hie me to ‘Beauchamp,’ and without further ado, and without picking and choosing my words, tell her how she has struck upon me; and then, gathering all the eloquence I can together, try to make her take the same view of the subject as I do?” Sir Blaise was smiling, but nervously, for him.

“Tell me,” he repeated, “shall I hie me to ‘Beauchamp,’ or shall I order ‘Lurline,’ and ride away—away, a million miles away?” The smile had deepened into laughter.

De Quincey also laughed. Perhaps there was reflected sadness in *his* laugh, the shadowy outcome of a shrouded past.

“You are only exemplifying the will-to-live principle of Schopenhauer,” said he, dreamily. “As long as the world endures, so long will men love, and continue to love. Though Socrates says, ‘Whether we marry or not, we shall repent it.’”

“I think if Socrates had seen Miss Beauchamp his philosophies would have taken another hue,” said Sir Blaise. “There is in her beauty a reticence which half discloses, half reveals, the spirit. This is the charm which awoke me.”

“I know what you mean,” said De Quincey. “Not one in a thousand would discover what you, guided by Love’s mystic insight, have perceived. Half-hidden beauty is unsuspected by the million, and discovered with great joy by the few. ’Tis so in every form of Art also.”

“Miss Beauchamp,” continued Sir Blaise,

“has just such an expression in her eyes as Hortense di Cantilupe. I'll have that picture removed from its present position, and placed in the entrance hall. My mother had a curtain hung before it; she said the face was too full of metaphysical subtlety, and it made her sad.”

“When people get into that line of thought,” said De Quincey, “they may as well don the philosopher's cloak, and live in obscurity. Such people converse with shadowy forms; and flesh and blood are quite too obtrusively vulgar, after high talk with phantom problems, which are endowed, too, with such powers of attraction that they can hold you indifferent to the crash of Empires while they flute to you of Phenomena.”

“I suspect you of temptations in that direction, De Quincey,” said Sir Blaise.

“There lay my temptation,” said De

Quincey ; “but in these days when torpedoes are being hurled at the Church, one requires action, not dreams. Thought has run riot ; it has drunk the cup of freedom till it is like a horse without bit or bridle. I have, for some time past, given all my spare hours to the mastery of logic. I find it a powerful weapon in dealing with modern thinkers, for they are mostly badly schooled in logic. We could beat them off the ground they have taken up, by mere force of logical reasoning, if a band of gifted men would give themselves up to the study of a logical method such as Saint Thomas Aquinas—

“ ‘ Fides habet majorem certitudinem, quantum ad firmitatem adhæSIONIS quam sit certitudo scientiæ vel intellectus, quamvis in scientiâ et intellectu sit major evidentia eorum quibus assentitur.’

“ Reason and faith are at present like a

divorced couple in some parts of the Church militant. Truly it might be said of them—‘What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.’ Reason is only the handmaid to Faith. Faith has a supernatural birthright to mark her superiority.”

“Thomism is an exaltation of the Pope,” said Sir Blaise. “How could such a pure reasoner fall into this error?”

“I can adopt his logical method without touching the infallibility question,” said De Quincey. “Sip the honey out of every doctrine. A pearl is none the less precious for being enclosed in a worthless shell.”

“Assuredly not,” said Sir Blaise. And then both men simultaneously rose, and strolled out on the terrace.

But their walk up and down was silent, for Sir Blaise was meditating on Miss Beauchamp, and wondering if she *could* return his love; and

De Quincey was watching the rags of clouds which were chasing each other—now to meet, and now to part, and now to meet again—and musing on destiny.

CHAPTER XIII.

A B C.

“ Love by its nature claims the colour of infinity, and therefore the true measure of its intensity is death.”

“SIR BLAISE PANMURE,” said Mrs. Battle, rising from her seat in the dining-room window, a few days after the conversation between De Quincey and him, which we have just narrated.

“Miss Beauchamp, dear heart, it is Sir Blaise! and so beautifully mounted on a white horse—like Lord Lovel, I declare! ’Tis the old ballad over again. Let me smooth your hair, it’s a little bit rough. And, oh! what of John’s hands? he is such a fright

to open the door ; he was helping Jane to stow away jam all the morning. Well, never mind ; race is race, and you are Miss Beauchamp."

Diana did not look up from the consideration of Cossa and Carducci. "What singers those Italians are !" she said ; "'tis a pity they are *such* pagans."

"Sir Blaise is dismounting, Miss Beauchamp," continued Mrs. Battle, who was peeping behind those Venetian curtains Diana had rescued from the lumber-room. "How can you care to read about those stupid old poets when here is a *fact* to look upon ? Away with *fiction* !"

"A fact in flesh tints," said Diana, who still bent her head over the pages of the 'Edinburgh Review.'

"I know you don't see one line of that rubbish," said Mrs. Battle ; "nor should I,

if I were in your shoes. Run up-stairs, and put on that pretty Venetian gown; do, dear heart!"

Mrs. Battle had left the window, for Sir Blaise's footstep was heard in the hall.

"I think I like Cossa better than Carducci," said Diana, glancing at Mrs. Battle amusedly. "Well, adieu, *pour le moment*. I dare say Sir Blaise won't notice my dress."

"Trust him for noticing," said Mrs. Battle.

Sir Blaise, like Mr. Cantilupe, was standing at the mantelpiece when Diana entered the room. Perhaps the natural spot for mankind is the hearthrug; anyhow, they instinctively make for it.

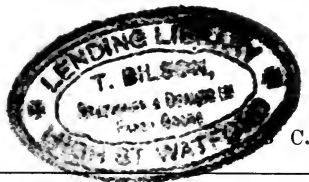
The charm of Sir Blaise, when talking to women, consisted to a great extent in the grace of deference—and perhaps no form of court pleases a woman so much. Some women would rather receive homage than love. There is a

charm in the former which may be wholly lacking in the other. You may madly love an individual, and yet pay no homage ; for homage may have a dignified element within it, which is, perhaps, alien to mad love. It is slow of step, and watchful of eye. There is nothing discomposing and crumpling in its movements. Perhaps Sir Blaise could perfectly reconcile the two elements.

“I think we ought to know each other better,” said he, looking down on Diana with eyes which strenuously endeavoured to hide a secret. “Sir Golf and I were great friends ; many an hour we spent together discussing salmon, and the best bait to hook them.”

“I’m so glad to see you,” said Diana simply, and then they both sat down like two children mutually pleased with each other.

Whenever the veritable old love story begins to spell itself out, it begins in



alphabetical form—A, B, C, and so on: this description of love, adding syllable to syllable through the years, has the true primitive caste about it. 'Tis as primitive as Odin's runes.

“I envy you this place,” said Sir Blaise; “it is ever so much nicer than Whitefriars. I've had no finger in the restoration business.”

“It's a tumbledown old spot,” said Diana; “but I'm very pleased with it for all that.”

“Tell me of your present life,” said Sir Blaise.

The question was abrupt, but the manner and tone made it endearing.

“I'm content, because it's so far successful,” said Diana.

“But the publicity?” said Sir Blaise. “You are cutting against nature, I feel sure.”

“I don't know,” said Diana, colouring

slightly. "There is in publicity some excitement; I think, when once you have faced a great crowd of upturned faces, you would never care to sink into obscurity again. At *first*, it was painful to me, *very* painful; but, as I grew conscious of my power, I grew fond of using it. I have now an absolute delight in facing an audience, and feeling that *I* am without myself, as it were; that for the time being I live in another's joys or sorrows, and realize the experiences of another form of mind. Yes," she added simply, "I do love my Art."

Sir Blaise grew redder under his bronze skin; he could not endure that this rose should be on exhibition.

"Would you not gladly abandon this particular field for other and less conspicuous ones?" he said abruptly.

Without answering his query, Diana con-

tinued the train of thought he had set in motion ; for Sir Blaise already seemed to have asked from her an analysis of her own feelings concerning her career.

“Perhaps, with this sense of power came ambition,—that eager, restless, striving, never-silent desire to reach a certain goal. To you, Sir Blaise, such an ambition must seem narrow ; perhaps it seems hardly quite so wedded to a high purpose now to me as it did ; after all, the sustaining principle of to-day is the phantom food of to-morrow. Yet, it is well, surely, to have some one ambition, some one aspiration——”

She paused, with her head bent slightly forward, her hands clasped tightly together, and her lips parted, as if waiting for some response from Sir Blaise.

“There *are* ambitions yet more suited to you,” he said ; then he checked himself, and added—

“Were you interested in the few words I spoke the other evening?”

“I was never so interested before,” said Diana.

Again Sir Blaise reddened, and his grey eyes darkened.

“I shall be ordained shortly,” said he. “I have been such a selfish fellow. I never thought that all I have I hold in trust. Now I see everything differently. I’ve miles of land: how can I utilize it so as to benefit the poor? Will you help me?”

It was very foolish, doubtless, but Diana’s eyes grew hazy. Why should this man ask her help in so great an undertaking?—She who had never considered the poor except to thrust her hand hastily into her pocket, and draw out a coin, when an importunate cry had entered into her ears.

“You will,” said Sir Blaise eagerly. “I knew you would.”

“At any rate, I can think out the question with you,” said Diana; “but I am so ignorant of philanthropy.”

“We”—Sir Blaise paused on the word “we.” It was a dear little word for the first time. “We might draw out a plan for building a number of cottages, where delicate children, the waifs and strays of society, can be reared.”

“What a delightful scheme!” said Diana enthusiastically.

“We will get our recruits from St. Giles’s,” said Sir Blaise. “I shall be working there soon; but I have a few rough sketches of plans with me; if you don’t like them, we can alter them. May I show them to you?”

With alacrity Diana rose, and drew a little

table, gay with a many-coloured Turkish cloth, towards the sofa where they were sitting, Sir Blaise rising hastily to help her. Already they seemed as if they had known each other long. There was the confidence which springs from subtle kinship of spirit. Then they sat down side by side, and fell to examining the plans.

“Each cottage should be presided over by a matron,” said Sir Blaise, “and each child must have a little garden to trim, and a pet of some sort to take care of. All this will civilize the little savages.”

“When your scheme is in working order may I visit the cottages?” said Diana eagerly.

Sir Blaise, looking down on the plans, felt stirring within him the wild desire to tell out this love which had over-mastered him—to fling the reticence of all strangeness away. Words were thrusting themselves upwards,

words big with those magical forces which can change the stale, flat, dry details of an every-day life into a phantasmagoria of brilliant surroundings. He *longed* to possess his desire *now*. He declared vehemently within himself, it would be well he should strive to possess his desire now,—get some response from Diana. But even in the midst of his reasonings a restraint *was* about him—the restraint of De Quincey's advice.

Neither flight nor avowal ; but wait and see how matters go.

In the strain that it cost him to curb his impetuous speech (for Sir Blaise had never been one to weigh and balance and measure his sentences), he did not reply ; and Diana now rose rather hurriedly, and rang for tea. Had he not liked her proposition ?

Mrs. Battle, entering the room at this moment, and catching the expression of

Sir Blaise, began to hit about wildly in the regions of wherefore.

“If it’s love, *why* does he look so? and if it’s *not* love, why does he look so?” She might have added with Montaigne, *Que sais je?* Ah! there is wonderful knowledge in that simple phrase, *Que sais je?* The deepest philosophy can still cry, *Que sais je?* Ignorance may cloak itself with authority, but wisdom will stand apart and humbly confess *Que sais je?*

“Look at these delightful plans, Homespun,” said Diana, drawing Mrs. Battle towards the table. “What do you think of these model cottages?”

Mrs. Battle found her spectacles, and, taking the plans in her hand, withdrew to the window to consider them. She continued at the window an unconscionably long time. She must have known every separate outline of those several

sketches, though she was hardly taking in their proportions.

Did Sir Blaise intend to propose to Miss Beauchamp? *Had* he proposed to Miss Beauchamp? Surely, there *was* some confusion in the air when she had entered the room; that indefinable something which is as impossible to define as the law of gravitation (not that Mrs. Battle had gravitated quite so far in her speculations as this).

Was Sir Blaise, the perfection of manhood, going to beat about the bush, and drive Mrs. Battle distracted with alternating hopes and fears before he did propose? There was no need for such beating about the bush, for was he not enormously wealthy? What if Miss Beauchamp's happiness should be endangered? *Love*—worse a million times than a blight among hops—was a love-cross.

The plans shook in Mrs. Battle's square and

very fresh-coloured hands. This thought was distracting. But then Miss Beauchamp, for all her careless ways, could take very good care of herself; she would never allow her heart to go out to Sir Blaise unless Sir Blaise first let his heart go out to her, or that both hearts *simultaneously* went out in the same direction.

Mrs. Battle's stout wrists resumed their wonted firmness. Admirably executed drawings! The waifs and strays would be better housed than many ladies and gentlemen.

There was no need for fear *here*. Miss Beauchamp would surely be Lady Panmure, and that odious Mr. Cantilupe would be sent to the rightabout—undulating movement and all. Mrs. Battle commenced to smile, and, smiling still, moved across the room with the plans, and placed them on a table, with an emphatic—
“*Capital!*”

Meanwhile Sir Blaise had wandered to a harp which filled a corner of the room.

“Do you play?” said he to Diana.

Without replying, Diana drew the instrument towards her, and swept the strings into one wild melody of song. Beneath her touch the chords seemed to fill the air with a thousand vibrations—every harmony to which life beats was here, and every sad minor wail, too.

Mrs. Battle was accustomed to such melody, for Diana loved her harp, and not a day passed but the old Court was filled with the sound of strings.

Sir Blaise stood in wonderment. Perhaps he was thinking of the angel who plays so divinely, that all the other angels gather round to listen.

Looking up as she replaced the instrument, Diana met and interpreted that glance; and

once more the rivulet went on its course ; but somehow a deeper tone had mingled in its music, for Life and Death were harmonizing with its note.

CHAPTER XIV.

AM I WICKEDLY AMBITIOUS ?

“ Obstinate questionings of self and outward things.”

MR. DE QUINCEY had left Whitefriars. He had several visits to pay before starting for Australia, and Sir Blaise was entirely alone. In a short time he would go up to Oxford ; meantime, he would read at Whitefriars ; if the proximity to Diana had anything to do with the decision, it was only natural.

The plans for the cottages gave a very sufficient reason for frequent calls, and Diana looked for his visits with an ever-increasing delight.

Intellectual wooing was much less disjointed

and broken than the primitive utterances of Odin's runes. Sometimes Sir Blaise and Diana would sit silent for many minutes; but it was a silence which poets call "golden."

On one of these afternoons, Diana was embroidering a spray of passion-flowers on a tawny-coloured velvet, and Sir Blaise was watching its creation reflectively. They had been discussing faiths and faiths, and creeds and creeds.

"I think, when we Christians really stretch out our hands towards God," he said, breaking a long silence, "we have to become as simple and childlike as the world was in ancient days. I think, at no distant date, this weary and sceptical old world will return to its childhood, and babble of truth and eternity. There seems to me to be one law for man and Nature."

“Is it a sceptical world?” said Diana. “How crowded our churches are!”

“Scepticism has a thousand faces,” said Sir Blaise; “it makes itself very comfortable in many a well-cushioned pew. You know St. Chrysostom’s saying, ‘the true Shechinah is man.’ One needs some illumination to believe it. Yet it is so. The Novalis expresses himself hardly less finely—‘There is but one temple in the universe, and that is the body of man.’”

“I should like to string such sentences about me,” said Diana. “Anything that adds dignity to our race—that exalts it—I hold as so precious; for when we look out on the baseness and meanness and smallness of mankind, in despair almost one turns round and cries out for some garment to twist about the race to beautify its shabbiness.”

“You are not inclined to hero-worship?” said Sir Blaise.

“The splendid exceptions in our race do really predispose me towards that species of worship,” said Diana; “but I only care to approach these master-minds in their writings. I would not know them; the spots on the sun would vex me. Take Carlyle’s ‘Reminiscences.’ How I delighted in that man till I read those petty personalities!”

“Directly we become personal, we become petty,” said Sir Blaise. “You see even culture won’t prevent pettiness.”

“The true Shechinah is man,” said Diana, “and the human race the miracle of miracles. I am working out this mystery, and gathering up the ends of my theological belief through you, Sir Blaise.”

“Through me!” said Sir Blaise. “You are determined to humble me.”

“But I do understand better that ‘the true Shechinah is man’ when I think of what you

said at Whitefriars on that evening not long ago," said Diana, half to herself.

All their talk was of this description, doubtless very misty to people who claim to be matter-of-fact concerning all things in heaven and earth, and whose religion is so very sacred that they can never speak of it ; or so very plain-sailing a matter that it is needless to waste precious time over such practical and simple matters as a future state, and our insignificant departure from one resting-place to another ; and who deliberately misinterpret all such talk into some wild conception of profanity or irreverence.

One day Sir Blaise asked Diana if she still intended, at all costs, to continue her recitations.

"For two years—two little years—I have bound myself," she said hastily.

"But if some one else freed your property, would this not please you as well ?"

All the devotion of his manhood was gathered in his face as he spoke.

Are there not moments on which a destiny hangs, and that destiny *seems* placed in human hands, or left to human lips to answer—these clumsy human hands and faltering human lips which make such havoc of their powers?

Long after Diana wondered — reading that question with the instinctiveness of love—at the calculating reply she was able to give—at the pride and ambition which swayed her.

“Two years—two little years; and no one but myself could I permit to free the estate. A Utopian dream has become almost a fact. Ah! it will be a grand day when Beauchamp gets from under the heel of the Jew. What arches I will have, and festoons! For centuries we Beauchamps have been of no account. There was a time of sowing, I suppose; all I have known is the reaping.

Perhaps I am proud, yet my pride almost seems a righteous sort of pride. I *must* see Beauchamp an unencumbered estate once more. Do you know, I would not let a great love turn me from my enterprise. Yes, I could thrust myself aside to reach this goal, and then——”

“Then, what?” said Sir Blaise. He had risen, and was regarding Diana with visible emotion. “Then——” but he did not wait for the answer; he had caught Diana’s hand, and held it like a vice. “*Then* I may tell you all.”

CHAPTER XV.

TIME.

“Dare you await the event of a few minutes’ deliberation?”

“WHAT news, Diego?”

Mr. Cantilupe was pacing up and down his library. Diego had just returned from Herefordshire, where he had been carrying on his observations, by fair and foul means, of the movements of Diana.

“Sir Blaise Panmure is in constant attendance on Miss Beauchamp,” said Diego, whose small eyes roamed restlessly round the room, as if in search of something.

“Anything further?” said Mr. Cantilupe,

pausing in his walk to sweep Diego's countenance with one comprehensive glance.

"Miss Beauchamp goes to-morrow on a visit to Lady Masters, and Sir Blaise goes to Oxford."

"You have fulfilled your duties, as usual, to my entire satisfaction, Diego, and you will receive your reward in the way you like best—*gold*. *This* is a love game, Diego; you have never been so employed before. It is not a simple affair; but with all your philosophy, can you aver that life itself is a simple affair?"

Mr. Cantilupe was smiling his worst smile, a mere spasmodic movement of the lip, and a slight display of teeth.

Diego did not smile in return; he was thinking how many more golden coins he would have to caress that night. He was thinking of the precious "pieces," and wonder-

ing what a man should want with wife, or child, or creature-love, when he can have the handling of something which the dust-bin cannot devour.

Mr. Cantilupe, regarding him as he stood there, remembered that the eagerness of desire was upon him. So he went to the cabinet at the end of the room, and touching the spring of a secret drawer, drew a heap of sovereigns therefrom, and thrust them into Diego's extended hands.

With a guttural chuckle, and the gleam of that strange light which avarice evokes, Diego withdrew from the room. The pieces! the pieces! the hard metallic stare of them was dearer to Diego than aught on earth. He kept that stare bright with much cleaning, for, once stowed away in the various odd receptacles to which he apportioned them, they never saw bank or mart.

“Let them increase and multiply, like the bulbs of a plant,” he would chuckle to himself as he handled them two and three times in the day, with locked door and curtained window. “Put them out to nurse, and I might wake up childless one morning ; besides, what would I do without them ? what would I have to play with ? These pretty toys, that can distance all the world, are they not worth the keeping—the pieces, too, that always ring out the same note ? Ah ! give me the pieces.” It was thus Diego constantly apostrophized his gods.

Mr. Cantilupe, as he continued his restless paces, communed with himself in broken sentences,—“Two years to play out my love game—two years to separate a pair of turtle-doves. Diana rose to my bait, her master passion is the redemption of that Court—pride and ambition. Miss Beauchamp’s only flaws.

She will inform Panmure of her decision, and he will wait; and while he waits—Ha! Ha!” Mephistopheles might laugh as Mr. Cantilupe laughed. Time—what will not time do? It will mellow the corn and rot the fairest fruit; it is a paradoxical force, it completes and destroys.

Tout vient à ceux qui savent attendre—good and evil. Time holds death and life in its grip, which will it shuffle out here?

*“If a Panmure wed to a Beauchamp be,
The White Lady then to her rest will flee.”*

“No rest for the White Lady will there be, for a Panmure to a Beauchamp will never be wed as long as the Duca di Cantilupe is an inhabitant of this upper region. If Diana is not to be my wife, she may follow in the footsteps of Diana of the bow and arrow; for the bride of another she shall never be! Come, Time, and seal the bargain.”

Mr. Cantilupe's hands waved the air; the *rôle* of Mystic, which he had so long played, had become second nature; to act had become as natural as to breathe.

No stilettoes or foul deeds, if we can avoid such means; rather a slow and stealthy march, by insinuating means; rather here a little and there a little, till the love that *is* sits and mocks the love that *was*. One need not be a knave to separate a pair of lovers. Sometimes something less pronounced will do as well; the babble of a child, or the interference of a coxcomb.

“She is caught by the vesture of this man—the ‘grand air’ of a Panmure. I read him as he passed me the other day on the road; the ‘old’ man and the ‘new.’ What would Fichte have said to him, with his transcendental philosophies?”

Mr. Cantilupe's inward sneer was so deeply

engraved, that it was impossible but that it should occasionally show outwardly. His cynicism was, however, carefully veiled; it had never budded into profligacy. Mr. Cantilupe was not going to forget his supremacy over men and matters for the sake of a sneer; for your cynic, what is he but a world-weary philosopher, who has tasted those grapes which the sun forgot to kiss? The world believes in its vineyards yet, and would rather listen to the preachers of good things. Miserable philosophers have their disciples; but their workshops are not crowded.

What though Mr. Cantilupe held that human nature was rotten to the core, that faith and truth were empty words, and love a mere madness? to which, alas! he had fallen a prey. Let the world believe in faith, and truth and love, because it is better for its moral health it should. He had even continued in the

faith of the Romish Church, which faith had been entailed upon him; for are not our faiths more heavily entailed upon us than our estates? He even felt some measure of sympathy with that Church. The more superstitious you keep the masses, the more easily will you work upon them; flood them in the exquisite allurements of sight and sound, and terrify them with the Confessional and excommunicating Bulls. Then, with regard to the cultivated sections, if you desire a really high flight in the ozone of ethics, I commend you to Cardinal M—— and Monsignor C——. These men break down the barrier between music and language; they can discourse with the elegance of a Christianized Plato.

Such were the beliefs of Mr. Cantilupe; but he had broken away from his meditations, and commenced to mark certain passages in the ‘*Divina Commedia*,’ which Diana

purposed reciting in the Autumn; and he cunningly inserted a running commentary on some of the finest passages; pitting Dante against Shakespeare, and placing them in an intellectual arena, to display their prowess and see who would lay down his arms first.

Mr. Cantilupe knew this bracketing of great men together was peculiarly interesting to Diana; he knew, in thought, he called her to his side to listen. And so far he was right.

Trundling along the country roads on her way to visit the Masters', Diana gladly turned her eyes away from the distressing poke the driver of the fly had obtained, to the consideration of those brilliant comments of Mr. Cantilupe's which were scribbled on every available margin in the 'Divina Commedia.'

CHAPTER XVI.

COUNTY SOCIETY.

“ Words have a great force, this way and that way.”

THERE is something so complete in English life, if you are not hopelessly difficult to please. You must surely own that, for all-round comfort and the harmony of surroundings, English life (among the Jeunesse Dorée at least) is unrivalled; but this completeness has another aspect: for those whose pockets are empty it is a walled-round completeness. Better the gay skies of Italy for such, for there your wants are few and easily satisfied; you are so filled other ways. Like Cato, you can throw the luscious figs, which grow for

everybody, from beneath your mantle, and say, "Here is my excuse for turning my back on England, which shows but a churl's brow to the poor."

The Masters' home had this all-round completeness. Lady Masters had lost her husband early in their married life. The blow had struck her but lightly, for she had no tenacious heart-roots; or, perhaps, the roots lacked soil; anyhow, the plucking up of a tie was like the plucking up of a weed. She was an amiable, docile woman, a little timid about public opinion, and a little anxious for a good settlement for Francisca and Cecilia; but should such settlements not accrue, there would be no biting disappointment.

Very happily constituted was she, for the friction of life could emit no danger sparks. She had followed public opinion in the matter of Miss Beauchamp. The *élite* of London society

had gone mad about her; if Francisca went mad about her—well, she was only following in the footsteps of other social magnets. Lady Masters had written the sweetest of invitations to Diana, to spend a few days at Dene Close, and Diana had accepted; for since the departure of Sir Blaise to Oxford she had found less pleasure in her solitariness.

“You are rather late,” said Francisca, as she greeted Diana; “the dressing gong has sounded a quarter of an hour. I will escort you to your room, and Marcia will make your toilette. You do not go in for maids?”

“Nor any other luxuries,” said Diana; “I am independent of all Marcias.”

“Well, Marcia is no *artiste*, I must allow,” said Francisca; “she could no more arrange a toilette like you can, than I could; she turns us all out alike. We have a number of people

staying here—a humdrum, *toujours perdrix*, lot—all save Felicia and Languedoc.

“By-the-bye, mamma has yielded about Cely and Languedoc, and they are to be married. He has written a poem on his bliss, and it’s so transcendental that it might have emanated from some poet in a planet. Languedoc is more than a rising man; his last book has created quite a furore. He has been massacred and calendared at the same moment, and during the process he has been quietly gathering up the *ducats*, and marriage is more than permissible. The covey of partridges are looking considerably startled; Languedoc’s poetical firings are quite too much for them.

“Felicia and I are intensely amused at the matter-of-facts’ round stare. Good gracious! what a daring and button-holing race we Saxoners are. Well, well, I must be off to my philosophy of clothes. Carlyle thought

he made something out of the subject, but a future race will doubtless find out what he was shooting at. I really don't think it was the French Revolution ; do you ? But we can but appreciate according to our intellect. I hear Originality can only be appreciated by the original, Wit by the witty, Art by the artistic.

“ Now I am going to make a scramble toilette. I'm exactly like a wayside spout which adorns the roadside near here. Whenever I pass by, I think there is Francisca Masters *materialized* ; it pours on and on in a melancholy drip, drip, as much as to say, ‘ I've no audience, no audience ! ’ Then, when it gets a watering-cart as a listener, you should just hear the torrent that rushes forth—pour, pour, pour. I'm the spout, and you are the watering-cart. What dependent creatures we are after all ; none can say to the

other, *I don't need you.* Well, *au revoir* — I'm off."

"Are you ready?" said Francisca, shortly after, as she stood at Diana's door in a dress strewn with roses.

Diana was leaning out of the window, her arms clasped across the sill, and one hand full of the starry clematis which was trailing everywhere in wild luxuriance. Her head was bent over the blossoms as if they held a secret. But do they not?

"More like the White Lady than ever to-night," said Francisca; "you look spiritualized. Of what are you thinking? But that's a clumsy question."

"I am thinking how God makes everything both for beauty and for use," said Diana. "Then from this thought another took shape—how God was in all that wonderful Greek Art; how He must be in all that is beautiful."

“What would the matter-of-facts say to such talk before dinner?” said Francisca. “Would they consider it good for our digestions? Mrs. Boosy is great on this subject. You will see her in a few minutes. She really ought to go through a course of æstheticism.”

“Even the æsthetics must confess, *Homo sum ; humani nihil a me alienum puto*,” said Diana laughing.

“Good gracious!” said Francisca, “I never came across that quotation ; but for the desolate appearance of Whitefriars, now Sir Blaise is away, I would look it up. *We* have no books worth reading. — ‘My Grandfather’s Tales,’ and so on.” Then Francisca caught Diana’s hand, and they descended to the drawing-room.

Lady Masters was sitting on a sofa, with Mrs. Boosy on one side and Lady Ashburnham on the other.

Mrs. Boosy was Lady Ashburnham's daughter, and she had married a leading physician, because he was the only man who understood her tiresome constitution ; so, as she said,

“Better marry him at once, and so escape the fees”; and Lady Ashburnham, being very poor and Scotch, said, “There is wisdom, Meggie, in your remark ; better so.”

After greeting Diana with much languid cordiality, and introducing her to some of her guests, Lady Masters returned to her friends on the sofa. Mrs. Boosy was making an *almost* inarticulate little grunting noise—she so very much disliked anybody or anything out-of-the-way ; and Miss Beauchamp was very much out-of-the-way. Some people do stand out like special creations. There *is* less of the animal (we won't say monkey, for it's a great mistake to limit the race in that direction) and more of the spiritual about them.

“You have forgotten your fan, Mrs. Boosy ; let me give you one,” said Lady Masters kindly, thinking those small gruntings were caused by the sultry evening.

“I never carry a fan—too much trouble,” said Mrs. Boosy. “*Why*, Lady Masters, do some people look so different to others—so unpractical?”

“I don’t know,” said Lady Masters, smiling ; for she saw the direction in which Mrs. Boosy was aiming.

“I don’t suppose any *sensible* man would look that way,” continued Mrs. Boosy.

“I don’t know,” said Lady Masters, still smiling.

Lady Ashburnham meantime was silently arranging her lips into problems : she was wiser than her daughter. At last the problem came to birth and broke out in broad Scotch ; for no amount of clipping and pruning

could prevent those rolling R's and striking *nationalisms*.

"Men, men, men are *weethercocks*. They turn about and twist about with every wind that blows. *Sensible* men go *daft* with love, and it's impossible to say what direction love may take."

Mrs. Boosy grunted again—Lady Ashburnham should really subdue her accent; it had worried poor Sir Frederick terribly—killed him in the end, she believed.

"There is much *purpose* in the face," said Lady Ashburnham, breaking out again, "much *forcibility*; but the dress is too out of the ordinary for me."

"Men don't like that sort of thing," said Mrs. Boosy; "at least, I'm sure Mr. Boosy does not." As this was likely enough, Lady Ashburnham's lips again took the form of a problem, and only the "cannie" light in her

eyes showed that she did not accredit *all* men with the same taste as Mr. Boosy.

“As long as I am neat, Mr. Boosy is perfectly satisfied,” continued Mrs. Boosy. “He demands nothing more. I *am* neat. I don’t attempt to look like a picture. I consider anybody lacking in common sense who looks like a picture, and I’m *quite* sure men *don’t* admire that sort of thing.”

“Ay, Meggie,” said Lady Ashburnham, “men are queer creatures. The more, my dear lambie, you see of life the more will you become convinced of the truth of this statement—women don’t know their own husbands, poor things, half their time, how should they?—nor do men often understand their wives. If we each of us could read what was in the heart of the other, I verily believe there would be but little calling of banns in the churches. At any rate, our plumings and featherings

would hardly be so satisfactorily carried on, I take it."

Lady Masters sat silent and smiling. This northern shrewdness amused her.

Mrs. Boosy gave another inaudible little grunt,—"Lovely women are provocative people. You must pick them to pieces, and then put them together again, and all this is so very exhausting; and, all said and done, they look as lovely as ever."

Mrs. Boosy grew very cross, and commenced a long story of the offers she had before she accepted Mr. Boosy; ending up with, "I think it must have all been because I *am* so neat." And then the *sotto voce* relatings of the old loves acted like a narcotic on Mrs. Boosy's original and sinful yieldings to cruel jealousy, and the little gruntings had become little "cooings," as she described the hard-heartedness of Sir Frederick, her father, as he had

nipped this opening bud and that; and how, *at last*, she had yielded to the persuasive wooings of Mr. Boosy, who, like all pet physicians, seemed to know how to regulate the heart-pulse as well as the other pulse or pulses.

“Mutual advantages,” she went on to explain. “I had the position; he the money. And, after all, to keep men at all in their place, we must have something——”

“Beyond *neatness*,” Lady Masters said; and then drew herself up with a little gentle horror at being surprised into a sarcasm—which was alien to her.

“Is not Miss Beauchamp lovely?” said Cecilia to Mr. Languedoc, who now sat in triumphant ownership in his favourite attitude at her feet.

“Sweet innocent,” he murmured, “how *can* I have eyes for any other than you?”

“Would you say so some years hence?” said Cecilia pensively.

“Will the same waves break on the same shore, some years hence? My Cecilia, there is just such a changeless monotony in my love.”

“Monotony!” said Cecilia; “monotony!”

“Now for a lovers’ quarrel,” said Mr. Languedoc delightedly. “My lady frowns; my lady pouts; consolations await me in the making up. Monotony, Cecilia, is the soul of true joy. Will that do?”

“That’s better,” said Cecilia, still pouting a little.

“Monotony is the order of creation, and a love that is worth having will have for its foundation monotony. Now, is that better?”

“Worse and worse,” said Cecilia. “I won’t marry you!”

Mr. Languedoc now raised his eyes, and

looked so submissively devoted, and so devotedly submissive, that Cecilia lost *that* pout in a smile.

Felicia Novello took possession of Diana as soon as she entered the room.

“It’s usual to feel rather woebegone when in the vicinity of lovers, is it not?” she said, as she sat down with that air of entire appropriation with which she lent herself to the examination of species. “I am vivisecting the pair before us—the poet, who is mellowing into matrimony; and the pre-Raphaelite Cecilia, who is the first cause of the mellowing process. Miss Beauchamp, shall you ever condescend to such foibles?”

“I should be sorry to say where my condescension may begin or end. Is not destiny painted deaf?” said Diana.

“How dreadful it would be if we were not partially blind as well as deaf?” said Francisca.

“For if the certain end of all beginnings could be seen, what helpless limpets we should become !”

“If we would escape mental pain, we had better forego love,” said Felicia. “I am now speaking of the higher natures; to such natures, love and pain are exquisitely connected. I could prove it, but I won’t; for a proof is an argument against an existing fact.”

“You shall write the love-scenes in our book, Felicia,” said Francisca.

“I’ve my heroine already,” said Felicia, “and I am watching her with sublime interest. I seem to see the meshes enclosing about her, and the Fates spinning their webs deftly. Some people have destiny written on their brow, a kind of foregone conclusion. Some people don’t look heroic enough for a destiny, though of course we all have our round and finish.

“Back to our ‘sweet lovers’ again, how will it go with them? I saw Cecilia pout just now. Love-making, however much it endeavours to hide its divine traits, has always an interested audience watching the byplay. When Cecilia pouted, Mr. Languedoc beamed like a million suns. What of the phenomena? Why did that pout provoke sunshine? Let us look into this matter.”

“Why, of course he saw how much she loved him when she pouted—wily old fox!” said Francisca.

“Oh,” said Felicia, puckering up her level brows in amused perplexity, “some old law is at work here. Extremes meeting, and acting and reacting, and fertilizing into irradiations from solar systems.”

“I need not say *she* will write all the scientific bits,” said Francisca. “Good gracious; won’t the critics cut us up, and the

public, with tender sympathy, join our fractured members together, and send us on our way—skipping!

“Miss Beauchamp, you are to be taken in to dinner by a gentleman of some weight and standing; here he comes, sidling towards you—brass buttons and blue swallow tails; rather ‘by-gone,’ but he is very much *avoir du pois*.”

Diana accepted Squire Musgrave’s arm with pleasure, for she remembered having noticed him at Whitefriars on the evening of the “At Home,” and she hoped he might speak of Sir Blaise.

Silently emphasizing disapproval of those endless *entrées*, Mr. Musgrave did at last open fire, and his first words happened to be of Sir Blaise.

“Fine fellow my friend Panmure! Do you know that he is setting up a village home on his estate?—a fine fellow. When religion

turns a man's pockets about, I call that practical demonstration; I call that Faith, Hope, Charity, and any other virtue you may like to tack on."

Diana turned such a delighted face upon Mr. Musgrave, that he felt sure his reputation for fascinating the ladies had by no means declined.

"Of course, you know Sir Blaise," he continued; "he is a popular fellow."

"Yes, I know him," said Diana.

"The village homes are commenced. I saw the woodcutters busy clearing away timber to-day. Those old trees are dear to Panmure; but he is going to rear another description of tree. Won't these sickly saplings bless him through the ages! for a good deed multiplies like the spawn in a river.

"Next thing Panmure must do is to introduce a Lady Panmure amongst us. I saw him before

he went up to Oxford, and more than hinted his duty as a landlord. I said, ‘The common custom and use of life will have it so ; you must be guided by example, not choice.’ Upon my word, he coloured like a schoolboy, and laughed most heartily. I began to question whether there was a lady in the case ; he is so changed. Though, now, I hardly know whether we could suit him about here. What is that about the unbelieving wife, in St. Paul ? But that is different—eh ?”

“She need not be a heathen,” said Diana.

“It’s a difficult question,” said Mr. Musgrave. “A pull-back in the shape of a Lady Panmure would be a real pity. I don’t suppose he will hunt, as a parson. Kingsley did you know ? Are you an admirer of Kingsley ?”

Diana’s expression deepened like a landscape which gathers more thought as the tone of

the clouds and the lengthening shadows give intensity to its form.

“I think he is one of the most sympathetic characters I have ever read of, and his imagination is as exuberant as Nature herself. There can be no genius without imagination. Kingsley has genius.”

“He is dead, you know,” said Squire Musgrave surprisedly.

“He lives in his works,” said Diana. “He is not dead to me. Neither is Emerson nor Longfellow, nor any great prose poet or singer, dead to me ; the *best* of them is living.”

Mr. Musgrave looked a little confused, and cleared his throat, and said “Ahem !” and then tried the tone of his sherry, and said “Ahem !” again. If in discoursing on Sir Blaise he had drifted out of his usual currents, he was still only held up in such currents by a description of Boyton’s belt ; he was nervous

and no expert, and was inclined to keep other swimmers at bay. This young lady would have him, out of all human aid, on the limitless ocean of speculation before long, and after all he was a matter-of-fact old gentleman in a blue swallow-tail and brass buttons,—nothing more.

“What do you think of our neighbourhood?” he said. “To my mind, Herefordshire is the pick of counties.”

“I think it is the pick of counties,” said Diana.

“The harvest this year has been exceptionally good. My harvest home is coming off next week, rather later than we have it usually; but the dancers will shuffle up and down the middle none the worse for that. Will you do me the honour to come, Miss Beauchamp? I’m an old bachelor, as you can doubtless perceive, so I have no lady to



express my desires. You will probably say, Why should I attack Sir Blaise when I have carefully avoided my own duty as a landlord? But I'm an old gentleman with a history—a history which, like old vintage, is none the worse for keeping. We all have our histories. You will have yours in time.”

Then Squire Musgrave laughed crisply; he had taken the most distinguished-looking lady of the whole party in to dinner, and it was only fitting that he should show his cheerful appreciation of kind fortune.

Felicia Novello, who had run out the adolescent youth whose budding moustache and small smile had commenced to pall upon her, now turned a listening ear to the stentorian utterances of Mr. Musgrave on her other side, and joined in, to the complete extinction of the budding hopes to which adolescence is equal as well as maturity.

“Mr. Musgrave has a history,” said she, as she assumed the puzzled air which was *one* expression of her individuality; “I have seen nothing historic about you. Now, I shall look for the Ivy—cruel, beautiful Ivy, that destroys as it decorates. Tell us of the Ivy. Who was she? Miss Beauchamp and I will protect you from all comments, if emotion overpowers you.”

But Squire Musgrave gave his white waistcoat a pull down, and then leant back somewhat heavily in his chair, and showed a very stout defence.

“Don’t you think,” said Felicia, glancing slyly across at Diana (the long sweep of her eyelashes rendered such a glance inexpressibly comic), “that the English owe something of their constitutional attitude to climacteric influences?”

“I have had as yet very little opportunity

of judging of the constitutional attitude," said Diana.

"You are a naturalized Italian," said Felicia. "Now, *I* am just the most horrible mixture that can be—half Irish and half Scotch. What with the pigs and the thistles, I am a very afflicted member of society, I assure you."

"The Irish," said Mr. Musgrave sententiously, "are thorns and pricks in our side. It's said the Celts crave a king. I would not care to be an Irish landlord. Our friend, Sir Blaise, has considerable properties over there. Whenever he visits them, I'm glad to see him back. One never knows who they will 'pellet' next."

At this moment there was a general move, and if Squire Musgrave's joking words had caused a tightening of Diana's heart-strings, nobody was the wiser.

How many strings have snapped, or are false in the myriad human harps? How many can respond to the human touch with one complete chord? Oh! mended strings, and lost strings, and false strings, and dumb strings, no wonder the old instrument must be replaced by one strung on fairer shores before we can find a seraph's note to mingle with earth's discordancies.

“Sing something, Diana,” said Francisca, as silence fell in the drawing-room after an intermittent and random volley of small-talk. “You will remind the gentlemen below the gangway that we are in existence. It's surprising how soon they forget all about us. We are getting to a stage of dreamy consciousness, like vegetables. Some of us lead a vegetable existence. Take Mrs. Boosy, for instance. Do you think she is more vegetable than matter?”

Francisca had drawn Diana into the conservatory, which was in reality a large glass room crowded with lounges and plants and birds.

“I think she has the fly-catching and fly devouring power of the *Dionæa*. Human beings are a very interesting study.”

“I would rather study a tree,” said Diana; “I really would. ‘Planted in the earth, bathed by the air, tended by the sun’—to what perfection it grows! Do we attain such perfection?”

“Diana, I will tell you what you are—you are, ‘*das rastbose ursach enthier.*’—Go and sing.”

CHAPTER XVII.

QUESTION DE JOUR.

“ All moods may be safely tried, and their weight allowed to all objections ; the moral sentiment as easily outweighs them all as any one.”

“ WE are going to have a pic-nic to-day,” said Francisca, the following morning, to Felicia and Diana, as they all three stood at the open casement which led on to the lawn from the dining-room. “ A pic-nic is a self-imposed affliction, and therefore comfortably tolerated. Won’t Dionæa enjoy herself, lacking condiments ! for of course, to carry on the torture successfully, we must leave heaps of things behind.”

“Where are we going?” said Diana.

“*Question de jour*—where?” said Francisca.

“I have thought of Whitefriars; you see it’s one of the most interesting places about here, for the ancient chapel is intact, and most of our guests are from London—Mrs. Boosy and Lady Ashburnham and Mr. Thynne anyhow; Colonel Trelawny and Major Clintock from Aldershot. Herefordshire is new to them all, I believe; even Languedoc has seen nothing but Cecilia during his prowls down here.”

“He won’t see much more now,” said Felicia.

“He is not married yet.”

“O petticoated cynic, where have you picked up your philosophies?” said Francisca; “you are a female Montaigne.”

“I have not sat under the shadow of Igdrasil without making observations,” said Felicia.

“How shall we arrange the party?” said

Francisca ; “our military must be divided. Though they really do better together, the one sets off the other. I call them Castor and Pollux. Suppose you take Castor, Felicia, and Diana take Pollux, and I’ll take the adolescent youth Thynne, and the three dowagers can drive together, happily and dowdily. As for poor Cely and Languedoc, we will put them into an outlandish old curricule which has been handed down to us Masters as a washed-up tribute of respect from the Flood ; *they* won’t notice how the wheels creak.”

“Let me drive with the dowagers,” said Diana ; “I feel so stupid to-day.”

“The very reason why Colonel Trelawny will be charmed with you. He will haw-haw, and you can wee-wee—that’s all we need say or do, to vote each other perfectly charming.”

Soon after the party were ready to start, and

Colonel Trelawny found time to whisper to his inseparable friend.

“What on earth shall I talk about to The Beauchamp?—she is out of my beat.”

“I commend you to the weather,” said Clintock; “there are the American storms, the tidal wave; then get on to yachting and Southsea, where we spent half our long leave; compare Southsea girls with other girls, incline your head gracefully, and look powder and shot. Now I think that’s pretty good advice from a junior officer.”

“My dear fellow, you are twice as knowing as I am,” said Trelawny despairingly. “If The Beauchamp commences a recitation, ten to one if I know who she is quoting.”

“Say—‘Ah! what a clever fellow *he* was.’ All the authors of any note have been men. So that’s safe.”

“I quite forgot to mention that Miss

Edwards, familiarly known as *Beeton's Universal*, is coming," said Francisca, running up to Felicia with mock consternation. "She must go on the car with you and Major Clintock. She is certain to study her toes, and so you will leave her by the roadside."

"Won't *you* come with us?" said Clintock, insinuatingly.

"Not I," said Francisca. "I'm going to study Mr. Thynne. I want to put him in our book. He runs on ordinary lines, and will therefore please some of our readers. Felicia will look into you."

"I shan't come," said Clintock, colouring furiously. "This is the first time I have heard of this book."

"It won't be the last," said Francisca. "Felicia and I are the oncoming fry. We shall measure our successes by our reverses, and advertise our book by quoting all the

dreadful comments that are made upon us."

At this moment Miss Edwards appeared, neatly arrayed to correspond with the fall of the leaf, wearing a pair of field-glasses slung across her shoulders, carrying a waterproof over one arm, an umbrella hanging by a ribbon on the other arm, and a small camp-stool, which contained an entire apparatus within its compact little seat.

"Did I not say pic-nics are a species of screw-rack?" said Francisca, as she retired to take possession of Mr. Thynne.

After about an hour's ride, the whole party found themselves in the grounds of Whitefriars, which, in the mellow light of autumn, seemed to invite speculations with many a minor query wrapped in their shadowy garments.

Diana's moods always took the colour of

Nature's—the very gaiety of the party oppressed her. Colonel Trelawny found it difficult to believe that this was the impassioned Miss Beauchamp, of Cosmos Hall, who could sway her audience as she would, to tears or laughter. But are we not a Trinity? and the three creatures which make a whole often put on a thousand disguises.

“The first thing to do when pic-nicing is to eat,” said Francisca. “There is exhilaration in the process. We all hope to add to our dignity thereby, for fat and dignity go hand in hand, according to Cetewayo.”

“The derivation of the word pic-nic,” commenced Miss Edwards, screwing up her eyes, and stammering with haste, “springs from——”

“Scraps,” said Francisca. “Let us pitch our tent.”

“Surely you are not thinking of luncheon yet?” said Languedoc. “Let us go and look

at the sunflowers and hollyhocks in the gardens. The sunflower's eye—what a velvety glance!—and the surrounding nimbus.”

“You will enjoy the sunflowers twice as much after luncheon,” said Francisca, as she merrily commenced to help the servants unpack the various baskets. “You may despise matter, and treat your body like a weed, but I shall not follow on in your school. As for sunflowers, one may look at them till one carries their reflection.”

Mr. Languedoc smilingly regarded his Cecilia, who, in turn, smilingly regarded him! Poor prosy-feeding mortals, let them be!

Mrs. Boosy had grunted approval of Francisca's promptitude with regard to luncheon. She was sitting on a tiger-skin, with her back resting against the huge belt of an oak. She thought absorption was the aim of life.

She was conscious of a vacuum, and held that a vacuum required instant replenishment—as hunger degenerates into an absolute turning aside from food, if kept too long waiting.

“Now, Miss Edwards, your camp-stool can be utilized,” said Francisca. “Mr. Languedoc, our poet, has a right to be elevated a few inches above us. When ‘the stroke of action has ceased’ and ‘the pause for reflection has set in,’ he will educate our gross and vulgar souls; he will translate our dreams, and show us how to reconcile poetry with the appearance of ourselves and our world; and will show us the superiority of intellect over Nature. Poets must see two sides in everything—we only see one, luncheon.”

Major Clintock managed, by a strategical movement, to secure a seat next Francisca. Her rattle exhilarated him like the rattle of the regimental drum. He wished he was

under orders for Egypt—a little sympathy in that direction would be pleasant enough.

“Are you determined,” said Francisca, regarding him as he sat down beside her, “to be handed down to *posterity* in my three-volume work? Remember, I’m a classic, and there is no fear of classics ever getting out of print.”

“Quite determined,” said Clintock, looking across at Trelawny.

“Very well,” said Francisca resignedly, “I shall examine you with judicial calm after luncheon; at present I’m rather hungry.”

“Why is gluttony called a mortal sin in the Roman Catholic Church?” said Felicia, as she helped herself to a truffle.

“I have come to that peculiar stage of learning when I answer all inquiries with this trenchant sentence, ‘I don’t know,’” said Francisca.

“I’ve heard of the ‘*Don’t You Know*’ school,” said Felicia; “but the ‘I Don’t Know’ is rare.”

Major Clintock had helped himself along during the drive with a great many “don’t-you-knows,” and he suspected there was *malice prepense* in Miss Novello’s remark.

“Eat your truffle, Felicia,” said Francisca; “there is something about a truffle which tends to the amelioration of irritable matter.”

Major Clintock looked what he meant at Francisca, and Mrs. Boosy, catching the look, sighed—“One pair of lovers was surely enough.”

“Irritability, so says Tyndal,” commenced Miss Edwards.

“Good gracious! Miss Edwards,” said Francisca, “you surely don’t read Tyndall; he *really* does not know what you are made of; he confesses you are a mystery.”

"I don't think he knows *me*," said Miss Edwards, who had lost a derivation twice now, and felt exasperated.

"He thinks," continued Francisca gravely, "that you are a succession of homogeneous extended atomic solids."

Miss Edwards's horns retired within her shell. This was too much.

"That is what you are now," proceeded Francisca; "but before that you were (we all were) anthropoid apes. Will that take the conceit out of us? We were four-handed in those days—capital people for pic-nics. Then there was a man-like animal prior to the anthropoid ape. The clever fellow has left a little implement of some sort behind him, and my informant has conjured up a picture of him too, too——"

"Seriously, though, why don't our scientific friends puzzle out an improvement on the

present race? we have not progressed very rapidly. Why don't we take another form?"

"Of what are they talking?" said Lady Ashburnham to Lady Masters.

"Journeying atoms and primordial wholes," said Francisca. "Let me pass you the mayonnaise."

Out came Miss Edwards's horns again. "I think I remember the concluding line"—

But poor Colonel Trelawny's woebegone moustache, which had lost all its fine-pointed excellence within the last few hours, so enlisted Francisca's sympathy, that she implored Miss Edwards to spare them.

"These scientific people are mad, perfectly mad," said Lady Ashburnham, whose whirling r's made one giddy. "I hear some of them say ogres and so forth are no myths—that such people existed."

"And *do* exist," said Francisca.

"Science materializes a man, and renders him perfectly wretched," said Lady Ashburnham. "I always forbade Sir Frederick to dabble in it. 'It will burn your fingers,' I said; and he invariably followed my advice."

"I wish I could find such a *sposo*," said Francisca. "If ever you come across a plastic unspecialized placental mammal (ecocene age) let me know, Miss Edwards."

"I wish I was a placental mammal," said Major Clintock, as he picked up a white chrysanthemum, which had fallen from Francisca's dress, and decorated himself with it. "As it is, I want classifying."

"You represent the British growl," said Francisca.

"I'm getting too civilized to fight," said Clintock.

"That's the first sensible word I've heard since we sat down to luncheon," said Lady

Ashburnham. "Imagine civilized, Christianized people going and sticking one another like you would stick wild boars: it's awful! I agree with John Bright, and I say, if we must fight, let there be a representative fighter for each nation, and let the dispute be settled by single combat. I think Sir Garnet Wolseley would soon have settled Arabi."

"The bloodless combat of brains," said Felicia; "that's the material I would use; we shall come to it in time. We are cultivating the animal off the globe."

"I'm *not* so sure," said Francisca maliciously; for Mrs. Boosy was still looking after her commissariat department as if a siege were imminent. "*Matter is matter*, and very troublesome matter."

"Look at John Bright," continued Lady Ashburnham, folding her hands and settling her back more comfortably, and thus preparing

for an oratorical display—for years ago she had been a light in Edinburgh *salons* in her own way —“a man of brilliant intellect, and a man of peace. I have studied his grand head by the hour.”

“In ‘Democracy’ the Yankee eyes seem to betray intellect more than the form of the head. After reading the description of the reception at White House, I positively feel contemptuously about Republics,” said Francisca.

“That ‘book’ did Francisca much good; she was a Radical a short time ago,” said Lady Masters.

Lady Ashburnham, at this juncture, discovered the grass was damp. “Such rich pasturage,” she added.

“That’s why the monks liked it,” said Francisca.

“Rich pastures and still lives,” said Felicia,

rising and placing her hand on her hip in the last approved attitude ; “ were they so much to be pitied ? ”

“ The monks kept a good table, I believe,” said Mrs. Boosy, looking lively. “ I’ve heard of the most extraordinary costly dishes appearing at their table.”

“ I should have been sorry to have been a monk,” said Clintock, looking at Francisca.

“ How funny you would look in a cowl,” said Francisca, surveying him with her leisurely stare.

“ Why *funny* ? ” said Clintock plaintively.

“ Keep humble,” said Francisca. “ *Why* should not you look funny ? A touch, and you can caricature anybody. How I have laughed at *Lofty* in ‘ Vanity Fair ’ ; did you happen to see him ? ”

All the party had now risen, and in the midst of indeterminate counsellings as to their

movements, Diana slipped away, and wandered up to the house alone. The first thing she noticed on entering was the picture of Hortense di Cantilupe. The curtain, which had hitherto draped it, was gone, and there it hung, taking an immediate and imperious grip on the imagination. Pass it by you could not; be you as unappreciative as you may, you must look, and looking, speculate; and speculating, turn away with an indefinable sensation that there was in this Hortense something eyrie, something different to most. Diana stood so long before the picture, that the housekeeper bustled up, to her disappointment.

“Lovely lady, is she not? Though not to the taste of all; some can’t bear the face, and yet they stand and stare, and turn away and go back. You would hardly credit the remarks of one sort and another that are passed on this picture — since it has been removed to the

hall Sir Blaise allows visitors, you know (even when he is here), at certain hours—one of the most liberal gentlemen, is he, that ever trod this earth. But, as I was saying, *the* remarks passed on this picture would fill a catalogue; the public know how to criticize, and that pretty sharply. Sir Blaise is very partial to the portrait—very partial of late. I witnessed the placing of it here. Sir Blaise was *that* fidgety, so to speak. I never saw him *so* before. Worrying himself over lights and cross-lights, and the exact height for hanging; twisting his handsome head this side, and that side, till it made my neck ache watching him. At last he got it fixed up to his liking, and then he looked as pleased as pleased, and there he stood as quiet as a mouse, looking and looking at it, for I should not like to say how long; and every evening, before he went up to Oxford, be it ever so

late, Sir Blaise would come and have a look at it before going to his bed. Oh ! he is particularly partial to it, is Sir Blaise."

The housekeeper's volubility was so great that Diana did not attempt to get away till the inevitable pause came, and then she expressed a desire to go to the library, and there the glib tongue of this estimable woman was silenced by the impressive quietude of those vast shelves of books ; curtsying, she left Diana to their consideration.

Some of the books Sir Blaise had been recently reading lay open on the table, some with a paper-knife to mark the page, some with the page turned down in anything but a careful fashion. These marks which betray us, are they not welcome to "love" ? What "sublime attraction" they discover to us ! A glow suffused Diana ; she felt "at home."

Opening one which treated of theology, she

found a slip of paper inserted ; mechanically she read it, without pausing to question whether it were right or wrong. In pencil she found these words, which seemed to lift her into another atmosphere—"Is it according to Thy will, O God, that this most blessed of earthly gifts should be mine ? Should I lose, in a creature love — my love for Thee ? Let Thy will be perfectly worked out in me, O God ; and if it be Thy Divine will to give or to withdraw, still let me serve Thee with all my heart."

Diana's eyes were riveted on the slip of paper. All things seemed to be slipping away, and she herself, for once, brought face to face with this mystery of a soul's absorption into Deity. How poor her pride and ambition seemed, how poor everything, in comparison to this ! Already, in Sir Blaise, she apprehended the passion of a soul to

reach what it exists to find—God. Human love is but a faint foretaste and prelude to this awakening. Sir Blaise had apprehended, however faintly, the true dignity of his manhood—for is not man in his perfect form “Heaven,” according to ethical laws?

How immeasurably spirit is distanced from spirit, what oceans and continents divide limitless thought! Here were the chatterers jabbering of time, and here was Diana brooding over the mysteries of eternity; and yet so admirably concealed are our spirits in the fine armour which protects us, that, though the hemispheres may divide us, it is only apprehended of the subtle.

“Miss Beauchamp,” cried Felicia, as, followed by the rest of the party, she entered the library, “we have all been wondering what had become of you—at least, those of us,” she added, *sotto voce*, “who have any powers of

wonderment left. I tumbled out of that stage long ago."

"Here come the 'Skyes,'" said Francisca; "now, not one of us have such a deep expression in our eyes—not one. We all look perfectly vapid beside them."

"I will send you half a dozen such dogs," said Clintock; "I have a splendid breed."

Felicia sighed, and glanced at Diana. The Besant and Rice Limited Company had received its *coup de grâce*. Francisca would never resist this.

"And I've a couple of deerhounds up at my place in Scotland, the envy of all the ladies about there; and I have never given them away yet, but will *now*—will you have them?"

Felicia and Diana's moving drapery swept unheeded by the pair. Skye terriers and deerhounds were quite too much for Francisca's

little citadel. There was a triumphant beam in Clintock's small and rather hardened eyes as he glanced at Trelawny, who was caressing his moustache into fine-pointed excellence once more.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SANCTUARIES.

*“ Love that hath us in the net,
Can he pass and we forget ?
Many suns arise and set,
Many a chance the years beget.
Love the gift is love the debt ;
Even so.
Love is hurt with jar and fret,
Love is made a vague regret ;
Eyes with idle tears are wet,
Idle habit links us yet.
What is love ? for we forget.
Ah no ! no ! ”*

“ DIANA, may I come in ? ” The voice was Francisca’s and the hour was late.

“ Of course,” said Diana, as she opened the door.

“You are utterly unlike other girls,” said Francisca; “and I don’t know whether you will be pleased with me; but I am come to have a sanctuary talk. Now you, Diana, without being manly, have manly ways.”

“I’ve always led a solitary description of life,” said Diana, whose burnished hair was streaming down her back, and “golden lilies” thrust into a pair of Chinese shoes.

“Men never let you into their sanctuaries, but I am going to let you into mine,” said Francisca.

“You will make it a vulgar place,” said Diana. “Only the feet we love best, and trust to the death, should tread our sanctuaries.”

“It’s not my way,” said Francisca; “any roadside beggar may turn over my treasures, and steal them, for all I care. Human nature is as various as snow-flakes; thanks to the variety, we are saved monotony. When I’m

wearied of Plato's patrician polish, I can embrace Socrates' plebeian ugliness. You remember, I told you that I loved Sir Blaise. At eighteen, one is allowed to express one's sentiments frankly. That my mind is formed for my years, I don't deny; but I am shrewd enough to take the *minor* advantage of my few summers."

"Yes," said Diana, sweeping a tress over her eyes.

"Now, I am going to love somebody else. What do you say to that? Is it poetry or prose?"

Diana shivered slightly; but so did the swaying limes outside, for a breeze, which carried a message of storm, had swept by.

"Let me shut the window; you are cold," said Francisca.

"No, don't," said Diana.

"Sir Blaise will always be to me the good-

liest man I ever saw," continued Francisca; "but am I to dress St. Catherine's hair because there is *none* so goodly? How do all the ordinary little couples we see strutting about in a description of dough-cake happiness get on? Have they *no* aspirations? Is dough-cake, after all, more beneficial than one of Gunter's elegant creations? I see Sir Blaise in every glorious old tradition and legend which can charm and captivate the fancy. He has caught my imagination, but the vision is not for me."

Francisca paused for several seconds, and Diana remained silent.

"Mrs. Boosy," continued Francisca, "married Mr. Boosy because his prescriptions allowed her a further absorption of dainty meats—that and the fees together. You know what a Court darling's fees are?"

"Oh! don't," said Diana, laughing.

“Quite true; if we were to dive into the motives which prompt the greater part of matrimonial arrangements, our *hair* would hardly set so meekly on our brows as at present. Mr. Boosy married Mrs. Boosy because she is Lady Ashburnham’s daughter; and this adds lustre to the social standing of the study of medicine. Now, *I* should never condescend to such small motives.”

Diana’s shoulders were shaking beneath her thick tresses. She was thinking of the Skye terriers and deerhounds.

“After all,” said Francisca, “what is so pleasing in a woman as a yielding nature? And even if I had not a yielding nature, I’m no Helen of Argos—I have no ‘universal beauty.’ I have summed up my best points; I know exactly where I am. All women should occasionally take a glance round themselves and classify their charms, and

discover *where* they lie ; half the miseries of life are caused by omission to take this glance round. Each separate one of us can be an Orphée on some point. *You*, Diana, are like Helen of Argos ; for *you*—no matter—you must always consort with demi-gods. Your spirit will seek them out ; but hobbledehoy Francisca Masters has no universal radiance about her, or exceptional radiance either, hence——”

Francisca paused, then said abruptly—

“How do you like Major Clintock ? But, I won’t await an answer ; I know you too well. I will tell you all about him. During our drive home this evening I thoroughly examined him. He is a little tired of life ; a little anxious for a settlement in life. The lady must have a little money to add to his little. He never quite decided where to settle till to-day ; he is more heroic than

he looks, and his hands (for a careful man) take very kindly to his pockets, which sign I consider favourable; for I really do abhor a screw. Marry a screw, and your life will be rendered a procession of ghastly deeds—a description of sliding board from one *gaucherie* to another.”

“I suppose Major Clintock is Scotch?” said Diana.

“Yes; and here comes the worst part of the story. There are six Misses Clintock, and they are living on the estate; and, of course, if he marries, the six must leave; and, he hinted, it would be like tearing up Scotch firs.”

Again Diana shivered. There is a terrible cruelty in life. Our unthinking feet are terribly metallic in their tread. We crush out human life as easily as the tiny insects beneath our heel, after all.

“This sounds cruel,” said Francisca; “but the weak must give way to the strong—according to Darwin.”

“What says Buddha?” said Diana, breaking her long silence: “‘There is nothing but sorrow in life; sorrow is produced by our affections; our affections must be destroyed in order to destroy the root of sorrow;’ and that he could teach mankind how to eradicate all affections, all passions, all desires——”

“Impossible!” said Francisca. “Each new circumstance of our lives creates a fresh root. We should spend all our time with a spade in our hand.”

“Perhaps,” said Diana, pursuing her own train of thought, “out of a death-throe may spring up some flower which will fit us for Paradise. Life feeds on death; death animates life. Mystery upon mystery surrounds us.”

“Six Misses Clintock,” continued Francisca,

notching them off on her fingers; "and all rooted in the soil. The thing must be done in a bustle, or it will never be done. Sometimes a whirlwind is needed. There is such confusion and smash and havoc, all round, that somebody is sure to get their own way in the middle of it."

"Have you known Major Clintock long?" said Diana.

"I met him this season—he had no personality—leaning against Rotten Row railings; but everybody has a chance of being discovered, with a background of pasture land and grazing cows. We are tired of the serene landscape and the grazing cows, with their occasional glance of placid wonderment at our indifference to herbage. We say, 'Here comes a man! a woman! a child! Hurrah!' Major Clintock has gained a personality from mere backage."

And then Francisca's eyelids began to droop rather heavily over her saucy eyes, and pulling herself together with a certain military erectness, which was natural to her, she bade Diana a prompt good-night, and went to her own room.

Blowing out the wax-lights, Diana threw herself into a chair by the open window.

The moon looked out from its veil of massing clouds, and the wind had commenced the long low whistle which is significant of its most dangerous mood—that whistle which stirs the sap to a very madness in the trees, and makes them ready to battle; so that, by-and-by, as the whistle is lost in the shout and the scream, they throw up wild arms, and meet the rough embrace of this mysterious force with exultancy.

Now the massing clouds parted for a moment, and again the troubled face of the moon was

visible as they fled hither and thither like a vanquished foe ; and now they massed again, and all was thick darkness.

To Diana, the impending storm fitted her mood ; she felt oppressed with a vague sense of fear, and yet she could find no satisfactory answer to the *wherefore* she sedulously asked herself.

That Sir Blaise loved her she was conscious. Blessed consciousness, how often did she con over this treasured secret with exultant joy ! That he made excuses for her ambition, she had also divined ; his generous nature would clothe even a foible with some reflex virtue. He loved her ; and love, like the sun, decks a weed with some beauty. Love is so prolific in itself that it quickly yields a rich harvest. Love has a royal mantle, and grace and dignity follow in its footsteps. Yet the two years, which had seemed as nothing yesterday,

loomed out like the rolling centuries to-night. What if she freed Beauchamp, and some intervening shadow came meantime between Sir Blaise and her?

Diana rose; the thought was unbearable. What shadow *could* come? Only the shadow of death. And, in the strength of her love, Diana felt almost as if she could parry that grim visitant, should he hover overhead.

Diana felt her whole being strung to such tension that she longed for the relief of tears; for fears find their best outlet in this form, and the next moment may find us smiling in happy disdain at our own superstition or stupidity; but to natures capable of the highest pitch of suffering, tears are no gracious visitants. They associate with the lazy, smiling, sanguine temperaments — natures which, though deprived of everything, and cut up into pieces, yet crawl comfortably

together, and are found in the broad ways and frequented paths, sunning themselves, and fraternizing with their kind.

To such, anguish is as mysterious and *unknowable* as the phenomena with which they are surrounded. The phenomena are outward ; they see, but have no part in them. So is suffering.

Looking out into the darkening night, Diana's cry went forth—"Keep me from any great trouble !" But, like Agamemnon calling, not only on the gods, but on rivers and stars, she felt no assurance of an answer.

CHAPTER XIX.

A WILD NIGHT.

“ Fhir a bhata (na horo eile).

Fhir a bhata (na horo eile).

Fhir a bhata (na horo eile).

Chead soire slann leid ge thobp a theid w.”

WE can never overcome a feeling of awe at the boom of thunder, at the bright shining of lightning. All the fine words in the world about electricity, and cloud meeting cloud, and accruing results, *cannot* rob a storm of its awful majesty. Ancient man cowered before the blast of the tempest, and dreamed of extirpating vengeance. Modern man may smile philosophically; but he is none the less

glad to have a roof over his head and a few crossway beams to protect him, withal.

Not often is peaceful England visited by such a storm as swept over her shores *that* night. The breeze, which had ruffled the swaying limes but a short time before, had kindled into a raging whirlwind, which moaned in the chimneys and dashed against the window-panes like the rattle of musketry. Nature's most awful passion had come and gone in the throes of thunder and lightning, and now its wild fury was passing away in the blinding rain and the whistling wind. Felicia Novello and Francisca had both fled in wild alarm into Lady Ashburnham's room.

"Give me a Scotchwoman in times of danger," Felicia had said as she tapped at Francisca's door, and dragged her along the corridor. "I've tried all nationalities in storms and whatnot, and for a stout defence

give me the Scotch. You will see Lady Ashburnham, probably, comfortably tucked up in bed, swathed in a multitude of flannels and fast asleep, just as if Nature was not lounging to sweep away man and beast off the face of the globe."

Felicia's words proved true. Lady Ashburnham was slumbering peacefully—and quite as happily in a storm as in a calm.

"Wake up, Lady Ashburnham," said Felicia, giving her a gentle shake. "Everybody is up and about."

"A storm, is it?" said she, arising with every sense in capital working order. "And what's a storm, to make you *afraid*? Put your trust in Providence, and go *back* to your sleep."

"Sleep, with thunderbolts as a narcotic!" said Felicia. "Who but a Scotchwoman could?"

“And it’s out of bed ye are determined to get me,” said Lady Ashburnham (now giving way to her native Highland, to discourse on Gaelic courage). “You should see a storm over Fladda and Staffa; after that, you would think nothing of this. What sights and sounds and daft laughter! *Hut!* my lassies, this is like the *wee bit* scrill of a new-born babe. ’Tis nae like the mad passion of our *Hieland* storms, which begin with a moan and a wail, and end up like the tread of ten thousand *Hielanders* as they march to their death.

“Aye! it’s a wild shore that mothered me. I was nursed to the chant of the wild music of Mull; and is it fear she taught me? *Na—na*; I was born and bred *amang* the granite of her coasts. It’s a wild shore that mothered me, but she nurtured me to have *nae* fear. Often and often

I've been out in my father's yacht in the Sound of Mull, with the sea running as high as the Atlantic can run; not a star in the sky visible, and all black around. Aye! the Sound can be awful rough—for all the pretty colours she can show when the sun lightens on her.

"It's a wild coast that mothered me, and the lesson she taught me was, 'Have *nae* fear.' Often and often, lassies, I fall asleep to the wild music of the waters of Mull; dear is its music to me. As a child, I would make my grand collections of seaweed, for there the hues of it are wonderful. Your *wee* bits of brown stuff and green stuff, at your English watering-places, what are they?"

"What is Miss Beauchamp about?" said Felicia, suddenly interrupting Lady Ashburnham's reminiscences; which, indeed, were never far distant, for the Scotch are as

tenacious of their recollections as of their pedigrees.

“Her door is locked,” said Francisca. “I went to call her a few minutes before you came to me, but she begged me to leave her alone.”

“*Aye, aye,*” said Lady Ashburnham, “did I not say there was much forcibility about the face? Maggie has *nae* discernment; but she takes after poor Sir Frederick; he liked nothing out of the ordinary but that tallied with his politics; maybe Miss Beauchamp has some of the Gaelic in her.”

“No, no,” said Francisca; “you Scotch people sprout out as Premiers, Archbishops, and Commandants; for the thistle is to be seen in the most conspicuous places in England; but Miss Beauchamp is *English*, purely *English*.”

“Well, so was my husband, Sir Frederick,”

said Lady Ashburnham. "But what matter what race we be when the end comes, and Providence claims us? Providence won't ask us whether we be Celts or Saxons; Providence will ask us, 'Have you done your religious duties?' And now go away to your sleep, lassies, and have *nae* fear."

Miss Novello and Francisca, having caught the Gaelic mood, did so, and, when morning broke in, like the calm which succeeds a storm, wondered why they had been so frightened.

CHAPTER XX.

UNREST.

"To thine own self be true."

To the consternation of all the party, Diana announced her intention of returning to Beauchamp on the following day.

She had received a letter from Mr. Cantilupe by the early post, to say that the first recitation for the season at Cosmos Hall was announced for a week hence, and her attendance was needed in town; as, however difficult it may be to transcend perfection, still there were passages in the 'Divina Commedia' which he trusted Miss Beauchamp would do him the honour to recite in his presence.

“You know the interest I take in you,” he added, “and the jealous care with which I guard the very great reputation you have gained. The fame of your transparent renderings of the inspirations of our poets will soon penetrate from continent to continent. Gain London, and you gain the world.”

But his praise failed to stir Diana's pulse. She had given her word to Mr. Cantilupe that for two years she would appear duly at Cosmos Hall, and she never thought of going back from it; but, nevertheless, the glow of enthusiasm was gone—at any rate, for the time being. *Why* a grey morning had come and shaded down all the glory colours from her art and enterprise, she knew not; but she could hardly have spoken about the garlands and flags with which she would decorate Beauchamp—two years hence—to-day.

She only felt a yearning desire to let Sir

Blaise tell her all *now*—to gather his love to herself *now*; and let mortgages and everything else do with themselves as they liked best. What was pride or ambition in comparison to love? What though Miss Beauchamp with a rent-roll was other than Miss Beauchamp without dower? Sir Blaise was indifferent to all this. He would beckon her to his side, though she stood bereft of all the world accounts—yes, even as Cophetua the Beggar Maid. But she had chosen her path, and she must walk in it.

But when these two dreary years had run out—ah, then! The colour sprang to Diana's cheeks, and the light to her eyes. . . .

“You might stay over to-night, at any rate,” said Francisca, as Diana was explaining her hasty departure to Lady Masters. “We are going to try Thought Reading; and it would be so interesting to ‘experimentalize’ on you. At the touch of our fingers on your

shoulders, you would be certain to move in the right direction. We have some bonbons for Mrs. Boosy,—of course she will waddle towards them; and for Mr. Languedoc, a volume of De Musset's poems, which, if he makes a dash at, he is to receive as a present from Felicia and me. Do stay and join in the game!"

But Diana was longing to be back at Beauchamp, even if the study of the '*Divina Commedia*' did not imperatively demand her attention.

Mrs. Battle's comely face was bathed in smiles, as she stood on the hall-steps watching the fly which was bringing Miss Beauchamp up the avenue. For Francisca had well said, when she declared that Diana's beauty was of the "diffusive order."

Mrs. Battle had missed this "Helen of Argos," whose nature, though she understood

it not, had a wonderful fascination for her; and to Diana, the little kindly deeds and homely touches which sprang from the simple heart of Mrs. Battle were sweet as water from some wayside spring.

Sometimes it was a little bunch of flowers that greeted Diana, waking — haphazard combinations, of Mrs. Battle's own peculiar selecting, and placed on the toilet-table amidst many costly nicknacks, with stealthy steps, for fear of disturbing Miss Beauchamp. Sometimes it was an impossible-looking collar, which she had spent many weeks in embroidering, that Diana found amongst her 'confections' — little services of affection, which were none the less sweet for their unconsciousness of all incongruity.

"I am so glad to come home, Mrs. Battle," said Diana. "I will never pay another visit; the restraint galls me, and the discipline

makes me feel like a caged bird. You see I've never been disciplined."

"I've been dismal without you—dismal indeed! Miss Beauchamp," said Mrs. Battle. "Yesterday, Mrs. Bovin was over here, trying to cheer me up, on the one hand, and do a stroke of business on the other. She made many excuses for Mr. Bovin's choler, and says he wants to continue your lawyer. I knew he would come to himself,—a practical, sensible man like that, giving way to his imaginations!"

"Oh! Homespun, you do me good," said Diana, laughing, and glancing round the dining-room with a gratified sense of return to familiar objects. "So rage is all imagination! That's something to keep in ambush for a lovers' quarrel!"

"Joseph and I never quarrelled," said Mrs. Battle.

"I have always been fond of salt," said Diana mischievously. "So is the sea. It's the salt that makes the sea so full of moods. But I'll tell you a legend about that some day. It relates to a mermaid."

"What of Mr. Bovin?" said Mrs. Battle. "He is a peppery man, I must allow."

"Tell Mr. Bovin that I am delighted he has reconsidered his decision," said Diana; "and I hope he will continue my lawyer."

"That's all right," said Mrs. Battle, sighing comfortably.

Then Diana threw herself into Sir Golf's arm-chair, and sighed too. She could not shake off the indefinable fear which had shrouded her spirit last evening. "In Italy I never felt so," she thought as she watched Mrs. Battle bustling about the room.

"Once I did, though. Yes, once, when I thought surely I was going to have the *per-*

nizioso. That was because I had been out on the marshes, many, many leagues from home, to see those old Etrurian tombs; and the sadness and the silence of those tombs filled me with awe, and the vaporous breath of the marshes seemed to sicken me.

“How thankful I was to get back to Rome, and to hear the sound of the strings, as Giulia sat in the courtyard, singing to her mandoline. I remember I said, ‘Giulia—sing. Sing something gay. I’ve been amongst those old tombs in Etruria, and though the bees were humming as they flew past me in companies on those wild marshes, and making music that I love, and there were starry flowers everywhere, I had neither eye nor ear for sight and sound which charm me at other times; for, oh! Giulia, I have been among the tombs.”

“And then Giulia took my hand and kissed

it, and said that I had surely seen some one with the evil eye, and that she would go and put up an Ave Maria for me. How well I remember it all! and since last night I've felt like that." And again Diana sighed.

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